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Dialogue Sessions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Topics: A Phenomenological Action Research Study in an Independent School Setting

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my incredibly supportive family. I love you dearly and could not have finished without your love and support. Thank you for believing in me.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to give thanks to God for guiding me through this process, especially the past year. 2019-2020 was filled with many challenges. This arduous journey was made possible with encouragement and support from many others as well. To my amazing husband, Angelo, you are the love of my life and my best friend. Thanks for your continuous love, patience and support. Dad, thanks for your encouragement when I was overwhelmed, which was often. When I felt like giving up, knowing I was making you proud helped me persevere. Mom, you are the most helpful and positive person I know. Your positivity and engagement in my research meant the world to me. I truly appreciate you and Aunt Ozzie taking an interest in my work. Alexa and Sam, thank you for your support and always making me smile. Whitney, who knew that playing school when we were little would lead to this? Thanks for being a good sport. Adam, your reassuring phone calls meant more than you know; thank you!

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Abstract

Administrators and teachers play an integral role in creating educational spaces where all students can feel safe, welcome, and appreciated. Inspired by the unique responsibility of educators and guided by the work of noted proponents of cultural competence, this exploration is approached through a triplicate lens including phenomenological philosophy, critical race theory, and social reconstructionism. This critical social reconstructionist-hermeneutic phenomenological action research study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of early elementary, independent school teachers' views on cultural competence before and after three targeted dialogue sessions.
Keywords: cultural competence, cultural proficiency, hermeneutic phenomenology, critical race theory, social reconstructionism, independent schools, administrators, teachers

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> Yet race relations are profoundly complex. We must be willing to consider that unless we have devoted intentional and ongoing study, our opinions are necessarily uninformed, even ignorant. (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 8)

The 2019–2020 school year marked my 13th year as an educator in the private sector. I work in a vast, diverse institution. I am a 37-year-old Black female. During a conversation with a White colleague, she stated, “You know, Erica. I don’t even see you as Black.” When I asked her to say more, she replied, “I don’t see your color; you and I are the same.” While I understand her intent was noble and she was trying to connect with me, her statement erased a significant part of my identity. There have been many other times someone who does not look like me has told me this or something similar. Differences should be acknowledged, not ignored, or avoided. When I tried to explain how this statement, while well-meaning, was problematic, I incurred frustration. Instead of this conversation stimulating more dialogue, the opposite happened and lines of communication seemed to close. The way to find common ground is not through colorblindness. Instead of choosing to ignore the differences, we must become more comfortable with acknowledging them and everything that comes with them.

Problem of Practice

Teachers must prepare students to succeed in a rapidly changing world. In addition to the 21st-century skills often emphasized by schools, cultural competency is essential in today's global society. Yang and Montgomery (2011) explained, "understanding racism, prejudice, and White privilege, knowing cultures and cultural differences, and being aware of stereotypes and biases are essential to cultural competence" (p. 2). With the competing initiatives in schools, it is challenging for teachers to have time to engage in meaningful dialogue on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. As stated by Mary Klehr (2012), "Threaded through conversations with teacher researchers, a common theme emerges: deep concern about the lack of opportunities within schools to engage in serious contemplation about the wonderment, the urgency, and the nuance of ever-changing life in classrooms" (p. 122). The problem of practice this study sought to explore is the lack of consistent discourse among faculty members on cultural competence in an early elementary independent school setting. As an administrator, it is my responsibility to foster an inclusive environment. In order to feel more comfortable having difficult conversations with students in the classroom, faculty members must also be able to engage in dialogue with each other.

There is a growing body of literature describing professional development as one way to support cultural competence in schools, as well as detailing the role administrators play in the process. The three articles that follow served as great resources for my problem in practice and stimulated ideas about how to structure my action research.

Marilee Coles-Ritchie and Robin Renee Smith (2017) provided an excellent starting point for this study by exploring the experience of four public elementary school

teachers who participated in professional development encouraging dialogue on race in hopes of creating a more equitable learning environment for their students. Additionally, Coles-Ritchie and Smith explored the risk involved for all participants. Five themes emerged from their data:

> (1) All teachers had experiences with racism in elementary school; (2) lived racial experiences impacted teachers' approach to conversations about race; (3) creating an open space was crucial for race conversations; (4) *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton and Linton 2006) provided a 'new language' to talk about race; and (5) administrative support facilitated more attention to race. (Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017, p. 177).

The authors concluded by emphasizing the importance of professional development (PD) to guide how discussions about race are conducted. Additionally, they stated that the PD should be authentic and acknowledge the participants' stories as well as the school context to maximize engagement.

In a second article, Lorri Santamaria (2014) conducted a qualitative study to determine how educational Leaders of Color at all levels address issues of social justice and equity. Her research identified nine common leadership characteristics: critical conversations, critical race theory lens, group consensus, stereotype threat, academic discourse, honoring constituents, leading by example, trust with mainstream, and servant leadership.

Kose (2009) conducted a qualitative study on how three school principals influenced social justice professional development in their schools. His work was based on literature that suggested five specific roles of the principal for professional

development: visionary, learning leader, structural leader, cultural leader, and political leader. Kose's (2009) findings recommend leaders "enact their five professional development roles in transformative or critical ways" (p. 654). Additionally, he proposed two types of professional development: subject matter expertise as well as social identity development.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework "provides a common world view or lens from which to support one's thinking on the problem and analysis of data" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 15). Phenomenological philosophy, social reconstructionism, and critical race theory (CRT) frameworks are integrated as a triplicate lens for this action research study.

Phenomenological Philosophy

Phenomenological philosophy is the framework for phenomenological research studies (Peoples, 2021). Before conducting phenomenological research, it is essential to understand its philosophical foundations. Edmund Husserl, known as the father of phenomenology, sought to understand the "pure essence of a phenomenon, of the way one looks at something" (Peoples, 2021, p. 30). This is known as transcendental or descriptive phenomenology. Husserl believed this could be done using epoché, or "suspending judgments to focus on the analysis of experience" (Peoples, 2021, p. 31). Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, supported a different type of phenomenology known as hermeneutic or interpretive. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger believed that "rather than bracketing off their personal experiences, biases and expertise regarding the phenomenon (as is generally required in descriptive phenomenology), researchers openly

reflect on, share, and attend to their subjectivity during data collection and analysis" (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 252). The phenomenological framework utilized in this action research study is hermeneutic.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed in the mid to late 1970s when legal professionals like Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman realized that the gains made during the civil rights movement had become stationary and in some cases were regressing (Cummings, 2013; Delgado, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT is based on four fundamental tenets. The first tenet is that racism and White supremacy are so ingrained in American society that they are often invisible. Second, CRT supports the idea of interest convergence for the dominant group. The third tenet supports the notion that race is socially constructed. Fourth, CRT endorses storytelling as a tool to investigate racism (Blaisdell, 2005; Cummings, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Cummings (2013) explained, "ending discrimination and racism through legal means has not occurred because of the contradiction between a professed belief in equality and justice and a societal willingness to tolerate and accept racial inequality and inequity" (p. 108). It should also be noted, "CRT rejects the notion that one can fight racism without paying attention to sexism, homophobia, economic domination, and other forms of injustice" (Cummings, 2013, p. 108). In brief, CRT opposes all forms of injustice and works to dismantle the systems that support it. CRT is cogitated in this study because it acknowledges the roles racism and White supremacy play in the power structure of the United States and its commitment to fighting all types of injustice.

Social Reconstructionism

Social reconstructionists believe that society can change through education. As stated by Sutinen (2014), "the essential objective of the social reconstructionist philosophy of education is to try to change and control social, political and economic reality by means of education" (p. 22). Weltman (2002) explained that in the 1930s, there were two factions of social reconstructionists, ideologists and methodologists. George Counts and Thomas Brameld were part of the ideologist faction (Weltman, 2002).

Thomas Brameld was part of a group of scholars and social activists called The Council for the Study of Mankind (Weltman, 2002). This group, founded in 1952, was "energized by fears of nuclear war and encouraged by the formation of the United Nations, these educators hoped to teach international cooperation as means of social reform" (p. 70). Referring to Brameld's beliefs, Weltman (2002) explained, "he claimed that schools must eschew their traditional practice of idealizing the present through the past and projecting the past into the future. Schools must instead teach the history of the future-to see the potential for prosocial reform in the past and project the possibilities for reform into the future (pp. 70-71).

Noted social reconstructionist George S. Counts was a contemporary of John Dewey, known for his role in progressive education. Referencing Counts, Romanish (2012) explained,

> While many progressive educators of his era focused their attention primarily on instructional methods and the nature of the child, Counts directed his efforts to the social aims and purposes of schooling. His perspective reflected a belief that the

> future would be more collectivity in nature and therefore it was critical that it be organized with fundamental commitments to a democratic ethos. (p. 41)

While Counts and other social reconstructionists disagreed with child-centered, progressive education, it was not the idea of "child centeredness" that was problematic but rather "the movement's lack of a solid social foundation. A school could not become progressive by mere resolve" (Romanish, 2012, p. 42).

Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, and Rationale

Purpose

This study aimed to understand early elementary, independent school teachers' views on cultural competence before, during, and after three targeted dialogue sessions. In a country as diverse as the United States, all teachers should be culturally competent. Schools should be an ideal setting to have respectful conversations about differences. Unfortunately, many teachers have no training in cultural competence. They are often uncomfortable having diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations with their colleagues as well as facilitating these conversations in the classroom with students. Their trepidation is warranted, especially considering the lack of specific training to dispel it. My favorite analogy regarding this type of discourse compares these challenging conversations to an orchestra. Corso, Santos, and Roof (2002) stated, "The goal of an orchestra is not to reduce the differences in instruments. Instead, the goal is to bring out the 'voice' of each of the instruments in a harmonic balance" (p. 36). I feel it is my duty to ensure that the faculty members at my school are capable of "conducting the orchestra."

Research Question

This action research study answered the following question: How do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions about cultural competence? Additional research subquestions included determining:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which dialogue session is most impactful for participants and why
- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

Rationale

Teachers must prepare students for a global society. In a country as culturally diverse as the United States, educators should be equipped with the necessary tools to promote growth and understanding with regard to difference. As an administrator, it is my responsibility to provide opportunities for the faculty to hone these skills to help develop global citizens who value equity and contest oppression. Opportunities to engage in discussions on cultural competence will help with this goal.

Positionality

Due to the nature of my positionality, I will practice reflexivity throughout this study and document it in my journal. I have experienced what it feels like when cultural competence is lacking in an educational environment.

I would like to say that I have always been a strong and proud Black female, but that would not be the truth. There have been times in my life when I tried hard to assimilate. I attended the elementary school close to my neighborhood for Grades 1 through 5. It was an incredibly diverse school full of White, Black, Latinx, and Asian students. The teachers were not quite as diverse as the students. I had male teachers and female teachers, White teachers, and Black teachers. I enjoyed going to school.

When fifth grade ended, instead of going to the local middle school with my friends, my parents decided to enroll me in private school. For Grades 6 through 12, I attended a small, predominately White independent school. When I first arrived, I struggled. I felt like an outsider, unsure of how to fit in to this new environment. I never had to try to "fit in" or "belong" before, so I did not like it initially. The first thing I noticed was the lack of diversity. My sixth-grade class comprised about 55 students, three of whom were students of Color: another girl, a boy, and me. No one was unkind to me there, but I felt incredibly alone.

One of my first memories at my new school occurred early in the school year. A group of girls came over to talk to me. Since I was new and had not found my niche yet, this was exciting! They asked if I was going to “go out” with *Chris (pseudonym). I was so disappointed. I did not even know who Chris was. He was one of the three students of Color in my class and the only male. Since I was new to the school and these girls did not know anything about me yet, the only reason I could come up with for my classmates to believe that Chris and I should “go out” was that we were both Black. I was really bothered by this. From this point on, I tried hard not to be seen as “just” one of the Black girls. Yes, I was a Black girl, but I was so many other things too. Throughout my

independent school experience, I felt like I had to be the spokesperson for Black America; it was exhausting. My independent school experience profoundly impacted my life and is why I serve as an assistant principal in an early elementary, independent school now.

Research Design

I facilitated the targeted dialogue sessions at my school for this study. Herr and Anderson (2015) expressed caution in studies where the researcher is studying a program that is "his or her baby" (p. 42). They even recommended bringing in an outsider to evaluate unless "the insider's aim is to continue to study herself in relationship to the program she has developed or to fold the action research immediately back into the program in terms of professional or organizational development" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 42). Since both exceptions described by Herr and Anderson are goals of my study, I proceeded as an insider.

Osterman, Furman, and Sernak (2014) stated, "Action research, as traditionally defined, is distinct in that it focuses on a problem of practice; is conducted by practitioners in their own organizational settings; and aims at generating, implementing, and assessing an action plan to address the problem" (p. 86).

As an administrator seeking to address a problem of practice in my school setting, action research was the optimal choice for my study. Action research is cyclical; you develop a plan, implement it, observe the effects, and reflect on those effects to plan the next cycle (Herr & Anderson, 2013). In education, you never "arrive" at a level where professional development can stop; we must regularly examine cultural competence.

This action research study is qualitative in nature. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted, “Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon” (p. 23). Phenomenology, the design employed, “seeks understanding about the essence and the underlying structure of the phenomenon” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). I approached this action research with Hermeneutic phenomenology. Peoples (2021) asserted, “in hermeneutic phenomenology, the understanding is that biases cannot be set aside or bracketed, and therefore, they need to be recognized and later revised as new information is discovered” (p. 35). Peoples (2021) further emphasized, “if students choose to use a secondary theory as a lens in their hermeneutic phenomenological study, the research would be a hybrid and should be titled that way” (p. 29). Accordingly, this exploration is considered a critical social reconstructionist-hermeneutic phenomenological action research study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) affirmed, “Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research … Thus nonprobability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research” (p. 96). Accordingly, I used nonprobability or purposive sampling for this action research study. While there are many kinds of purposeful sampling, I used convenience sampling for this study. Due to my positionality and the sensitive nature of diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions, I wanted to be sure that the participants were volunteers. Faculty members volunteered to participate in the targeted dialogue sessions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, “The data collection techniques used, as well as the specific information considered to be data in a study, are determined by the researcher's theoretical orientation, by the problem and purpose of the study, and by the sample selected” (p. 106). I collected and analyzed various forms of data for my study. My data collection methods included a reflexive researcher journal, a cultural competence self-assessment, pre and post questionnaires (instead of interviews), participant journal entries, session notes, as well as various documents and artifacts from the targeted dialogue sessions.

A journal was particularly helpful with my action research study due to my use of a hermeneutic phenomenology. I kept a reflexive journal and made an entry after each session. Peoples (2021) explained,

> If a student is completing a hermeneutic phenomenological study using Heidegger’s philosophy, personal biases need to be made explicit. Journaling would be a good way to do this. Students could write down any of their biases, their pre-understandings about a phenomenon prior to analyzing data. In this way, they could deliberately put their biases in front of them, fully expecting that they could be revised as data are analyzed. (p. 56)

Although I felt I had a good rapport with my colleagues, I decided to create open-ended questionnaires instead of conducting interviews due to my administrative position. I made this choice to obtain more useful data since the participants could answer the questions more freely this way.

Analyzing qualitative data helps the researcher identify themes, categories, and patterns to answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 216). Consequently, I employed coding to identify themes from the qualitative data (participant journal entries, open-ended questionnaires, session notes). I used NVivo software to facilitate this process as well as to store, organize, and code the qualitative data.

Significance and Limitations of Study

Efron and Ravid (2013) stated, "for action researchers, the focus is most likely not on whether the inquiry's findings can be generalized to other settings but rather on whether the findings can be useful for improving their own practice" (p. 49). As an administrator, it is my responsibility to provide opportunities for the faculty to grow in cultural competence. This study's objective was to deepen my learning, reflect, develop an action plan to address my problem of practice, carry it out, reflect again, and repeat. There is not an abundance of literature on cultural competence in early elementary, independent school environments; the setting makes my action research unique. I hope that educators who desire to support cultural competence in independent school settings will read my study and gain knowledge.

There were several limitations in this action research study. First, all nine participants selected she/her/hers pronouns as identifiers, which caused a lack of gender diversity within the sample. The next limitation was the time dedicated to each dialogue session. Ideally, each session would have been more extended, at least two hours in length. However, due to the dialogue sessions taking place at the end of the school day, I wanted to be respectful of the time the participants were dedicating to the study. Consequently, I shortened the length of the sessions. Third, most of the volunteers were

already active in diversity, equity, and inclusion work around campus. Therefore, their initial opinions on the importance of cultural competence were most likely higher than others. Lastly, I facilitated the three dialogues sessions. As a building administrator, it is possible that my involvement had an impact on the sessions.

Dissertation Overview

Four chapters follow this introduction and overview of the problem of practice. Chapter 2 includes the theoretical framework followed by a review of the relevant literature that guided the dialogue sessions. A description of the methodology employed, as well as its philosophical origin, can be found in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 reviews the data and explains the findings. The final chapter summarizes the study and its results with recommendations for application to my current practice and suggestions for future studies.

Key Terms

Culture: "a lens through which life is perceived." (Moule, 2012, p. 11)

Cultural competence: accepting and respecting differences; carefully attending to the dynamics of difference; continually assessing cultural knowledge and beliefs; continuously expanding cultural knowledge and resources; and variously adapting belief systems, policies, and practices (Lindsey et al., 2019)

Cultural proficiency: "a model for shifting the culture of the school or district; it is a model for individual transformation and organizational change. Cultural proficiency is a mindset, a worldview, a way a person or an organization makes assumptions for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments." (Lindsey et al, 2019, p. 5).

Hermeneutic phenomenology: requires researchers to acknowledge their past experiences and biases (fore-sight or fore-conception) as a part of the interpretive process; supports the belief that dasein affects the research and can be affected by the process as well (Bynum & Varpio, 2018; Peoples, 2021)

Critical race theory: a theory based on four tenets: the ordinariness of racism, interest convergence, the social construction of race, and the power of narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

Social reconstructionism: an ideology that supports the notion that society can be changed through education

Racism: "an institutionalized system of economic, political, social and cultural relations that ensures that one racial group has and maintains power and privilege over all other in all aspects of life" (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 2)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

> If teachers and administrators have not been prepared to teach, lead, or work with people who differ from them, then the educational leader must take the initiative and create a learning community so that everyone can master these skills as part of their professional learning. (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 16)

The United States' cultural composition is changing (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Nieto, 2017; Vespa et al., 2018). The United States Census Bureau estimated that by 2020, fewer than one-half of the children in the United States will be non-Hispanic White (Vespa et al., 2018). Given the rapid change in our demographics, a focus on cultural competence is paramount for educators to engage an increasingly diverse student population. The problem of practice this study sought to explore is the lack of consistent discourse amongst faculty members on cultural competency in an early elementary, independent school setting.

Rationale

The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) reported the racial/ethnic distribution of students in public elementary and secondary schools in 2000 to be 61% White and 38.9% minority (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017c). Minority student numbers are comprised of Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaskan Native and students of two or more races. By way of contrast, in the year 2015,

the distribution changed to 48.8% White and 51.1% minority (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017c). These trends are also present in private schools. Of the demographics reported in 1999, 77.3% of private school students were White, while 22.7% were minorities (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017a). In the year 2009, the numbers changed to 72.6% White and 27.4% minority (Digest of Education Statistics, 2017a). While the private sector numbers are nowhere near as dramatic as those in the public sector, there is an undeniable trend of increased minority student enrollment in both public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

Contributing Factors

It is logical to assume that a more diverse student population lends itself naturally to a focus on cultural competency. A reasonable question that follows is: What are the underlying causes of such slow progress regarding cultural competence? Why are these critical discussions about cultural competence hard to have in schools today? To understand these phenomena, an exploration of two contributing factors—the sociopolitical context of education as well as organizational capacity for change—is necessary.

It is virtually impossible for decisions in education to be politically neutral. Many notable scholars (Apple, 2018; Nieto, 2017; Nieto & Bode, 2018) have discussed the importance of the social dimension of education. Nieto and Bode (2018) posited, "schools' and the larger society's assumptions about people form a belief system that helps create and perpetuate structures that reproduce those assumptions" (pp. 14–15). These assumptions are part of the sociopolitical context: the "social, political, and economic structures that frame and define our society" (Nieto, 2018, p. 3). There has

been tremendous change within the sociopolitical context of the United States; globalization, privatization, marketization, and standardization have hugely impacted it (Nieto, 2017). The changes in globalization include increased immigration and changes in our economy that significantly impact U.S. classrooms (Nieto, 2017). Additionally, schools' privatization via vouchers and charter schools has contributed to marketization, transforming education into more profitable endeavors than an academic one (Nieto, 2017). This marketization is exacerbated by huge federal initiatives like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT), which emphasize standardization as the way to raise standards and close the achievement gap (Nieto, 2017). Standardization is enormously profitable for testing companies but does not yield significant results. Another issue with standardization is its emphasis on test preparation, which causes multicultural education initiatives to become less important. The culmination of these various sociopolitical factors impacts the bandwidth available for multicultural education in the classroom setting (Nieto, 2017).

A second contributing factor to the disconnect between cultural competence and practice lies in the organization's capacity for change. All change is difficult, and successful change even more so. Many scholars have discussed this phenomenon with varied but similar results (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2006; Gleddie & Robinson, 2017). Within the school context, Evans (1996) explained, "A school's institutional readiness—its organizational capacity to adopt and implement an innovation—is crucial to its success in innovating" (p. 119). According to Evans, six prerequisites must be considered when undertaking change in an organization. These conditions include the occupational framework, politics, history, stress, finances, and culture (Evans, 1996). Correspondingly,

Gleddie and Robinson (2017) asserted three critical elements of educational change: professional development, leadership capacity building, and cultural change. Noted scholar Michael Fullan (2006) stated, "those working in the field of educational change have not provided us with a powerful enough agenda for actually realizing deeper reform" (p. 113). He supported a focus on sustainability and leadership to create favorable conditions for educational change. Specifically, he noted eight essentials of sustainability: public service with a moral purpose, commitment to changing context at all levels, lateral capacity-building through networks, new vertical relationships that are codependent encompassing both capacity building and accountability, deep learning, dual commitment to short-term and long-term results, cyclical energizing, and the long lever of leadership (Fullan, 2006).

While it is challenging for an organization to be exemplary in all six categories discussed by Evans (1996) or the eight elements of sustainability outlined by Fullan (2006), it is helpful to have diverse perspectives to assess which areas require attention before endeavoring substantial change.

Research Question

This phenomenological study sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of early elementary, independent school teachers' views on cultural competence before, during, and after three targeted dialogue sessions. This exploration answered the following question: How do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competence? Additional research subquestions included determining:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which session is most impactful for participants and why
- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

Organization of the Chapter

The literature review will begin with the theoretical framework. This study was viewed through a triplicate lens of the phenomenological philosophy, critical race theory, and social reconstructionism. The theoretical framework is followed by a discussion on various distinctions in equity work including culturally responsive teaching, multicultural education, and cultural competence. Next, related literature on cultural competency professional development in the school setting is described before a concluding summary.

Purpose

A literature review gives background knowledge and provides context for the study. Regarding the literature review, Machi and McEvoy (2016) stated, "it not only presents the current state of knowledge about a topic but must also argue how this knowledge reasonably leads to a problem or to a question requiring original research" (p. 4). This literature review sought to survey various distinctions in equity work before making the decision to focus on cultural competence. This chapter will also highlight the need to explore cultural competence in the context of early elementary independent schools.

The resources utilized for this chapter were varied. At the beginning stages, I used the Academic Search Complete database to find peer-reviewed articles on multicultural education in the classroom. Next, I used Education Source and ERIC to locate more peer-reviewed articles. Many names came up recurrently during these search processes, such as James Banks, Sonia Nieto, Patty Bode, and Christine Sleeter, to name a few. I located these authors to further research their views on multicultural education and its impact. In addition to the texts found from recurring article authors, supplementary texts from classes in this program were useful resources on the topic. The body of literature reviewed for this study was captivating and rich.

Theoretical Framework

Before discussing various facets of equity work, it is imperative to explore the lenses for the upcoming discussions. The theoretical framework is the "blueprint" for the entire dissertation inquiry. Grant and Osanloo (2014) asserted, "It serves as the guide on which to build and support a study, and also provides the structure to define how to philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole" (p. 13). The blueprint for this exploration contains elements of phenomenology, critical race theory, and social reconstructionism.

Phenomenological Philosophy

Peoples (2021) explained, "students are commonly required to incorporate a theoretical framework of their choosing for dissertation work, but the theoretical framework for phenomenological research is always phenomenology" (p. 3). Philosophy is the foundation for phenomenology. Two fundamental philosophers associated with

phenomenology are Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. While Edmund Husserl is known as the father of phenomenology as we know it, it should be noted that the philosophy was around centuries earlier in various forms (Vagle, 2018). For example, when Hindu and Buddhist philosophers reflected on states of consciousness, they were practicing phenomenology (Vagle, 2018). Husserl's transcendental phenomenological philosophy differed from the more interpretive phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl. Husserl's phenomenology asserted epoché or the belief that interpretations of the world should be kept separate, or bracketed. Conversely, Heidegger's phenomenology stressed that interpretations and experiences happen simultaneously while dasein, or being there. Vagle (2018) explained,

> Husserl's phenomenology emphasized that the world should be bracketed so that structures of the phenomenon could be carefully described as they were experienced in consciousness. Heidegger's phenomenology stressed that phenomena are lived out interpretively in the world, and hence the world should not be bracketed but fully engaged in the phenomenological inquiry. (p. 9)

Due to the nature of Husserlian or transcendental phenomenology, one can only utilize secondary and tertiary frameworks with Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Consequently, I used a hermeneutic-phenomenological lens as one framework for this action research study.

Critical Race Theory

Noted law professor, Derrick Bell, and scholar Alan Freeman are key figures of critical race theory [CRT]. The movement began as a response to delayed progress in civil rights (Cummings, 2012). Cummings (2012) explained, "Critical Race Theory

targeted the law by exposing the racial inequities supported by U.S. law and policy" (p. 52).

Four principles characterize CRT. Delgado and Stefancic (2017), who have written extensively on the topic, elaborated, "First, racism is ordinary, not aberrational- 'normal science,' the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (p. 7). The second principle, sometimes referred to as interest convergence or material determinism, states that "our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 7). Third, CRT "holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 7). The fourth feature of CRT asserted,

> because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, American Indian, Asian, and Latino writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know. Minority status, in other words, brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11)

I chose CRT for one lens of this study due to its "activist dimension" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 7). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) emphasized,

> Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it,

> setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies but to transform it for the better. (p. 7)

Social Reconstructionism

Social reconstructionism recognizes the social nature of education. Thomas Brameld and George Counts are well known social reconstructionists. At the 1932 Progressive Education Association (PEA) conference, George S. Counts delivered his "Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive" presentation (Kridel, 2013, p. 289). As explained by Apple (2018), Counts

> was responding to what he saw as the nearly total dominance of the governance and outcomes of education by economically powerful classes. Dominant classes had gained control of schooling and the economy, and this situation must be fought so that schools could lead the way towards a more democratic society. (p. 686)

Counts urged progressives to change the social order, shifting the focus from the child to society. Advocates of this ideology believe that society needs help solving social problems that have not been effectively addressed. Social reconstructionists believe that something can be done about these problems and education is the way to develop a better society. Regarding social reconstructionists, Schiro (2013) explained,

> They have faith in the ability of education, through the medium of curriculum to educate "the masses of humanity" to critically analyze themselves in relation to their society, understand the ills of their society, develop a vision of a better world based on a conception of social justice, and actualize that vision. (p. 151)

Who will answer the call of George Counts to change society through education? I suggest the “lightning rods” of change could be educators.

Equity Work

While in the earlier stages of planning this study, I had difficulty determining the type of equity work on which I would focus. I considered culturally responsive teaching as well as multicultural education before I settled on cultural competence. A description of each follows.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching could be described as teaching practices that recognize diverse students' culture and adjust teaching practices to ensure they are engaged in the classroom. Geneva Gay (2002) explained culturally responsive teaching as

> using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (p. 106)

More recently, Zaretta Hammond (2015), defined culturally responsive teaching as,

> An educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing.

> All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning. (p. 15)

Hammond's definition includes the importance of connecting with students to create a safe space for learning to occur. In brief, culturally responsive teaching means knowing your students well enough to adjust your practices to ensure classroom engagement.

The History of Multicultural Education in the United States

The development of multicultural education is linked to the early ethnic studies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the intergroup education movement of the 1940s and '50s, as well as the ethnic studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Early Ethnic Studies

Figures like Carter G. Woodson and Charles C. Wesley worked during the early 20th century to include content about African Americans into the curriculum (Banks, 2004). Other pioneers of Black studies include George W. William and W. E. B. DuBois. The first public schools established in Massachusetts and Virginia were not segregated; however, due to intense discrimination, African Americans established separate but unequal schools for their children. The same happened in the south. While there were Black public schools with African American teachers and administrators, the "school boards, curricula, and textbooks were White controlled and dominated. Consequently, integration of the curriculum with content about African Americans was problematic" (Banks, 2004, p. 9). During this time period, Carter G. Woodson did an incredible amount of work to promote the study and teaching of African American history in schools. He taught at the high-school level for nine years, completed a history degree at

Harvard in 1912, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), started the *Journal of Negro History,* created Negro History Week to advocate the studying and teaching of African American history, and published the *Negro History Bulletin* so teachers would have materials for teaching history to students in elementary and secondary school (Banks, 2004). Many other scholars promoted these same ideals during this time period, but none were as directly involved as Woodson (Banks, 2004).

Intergroup Education Movement

Towards the end of World War II and continuing into the 1950s, many African American, Mexican American, and White people migrated to more industrial areas to find jobs (Banks, 1993; Banks, 2004; Sultanova, 2016). As a result of the new, closer proximity, there was tension that caused violent racial conflicts (Banks, 1992, 2004). The intergroup education was a direct response to this increased tension. The intergroup education movement's goal was to reduce the tension and improve relations in American society (Banks, 2004; Taba & Wilson, 1946). Taba and Wilson (1946) stated, "American education today is keenly aware of the importance of improved group relations if the United States is to achieve a higher measure of democratic living, avoid disastrous social disintegration, and realize the full cultural resources within the Nation" (p. 19). Advocates of this movement believed the best way to achieve this aim was in school. Taba and Wilson (1946) further asserted, "Intergroup relations are coterminous with total education; changed emphases and materials in the curriculum as a whole are to be expected as concern over intergroup relations rises" (p. 29). Supporters of the intergroup education movement included the American Council on Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Progressive Education Association, the National Conference of

Christians and Jews, as well as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (Banks, 1992). During this time, there was a remarkable influx of published work on intergroup education. Pivotal race relations studies such as Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford's *The Authoritarian Personality* and *The Nature of Prejudice* by Gordon W. Allport were conducted during this time. Important books written during this movement include *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Case and Class* coauthored by Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary Gardner.

Ethnic Studies Movement

By the 1960s, the intergroup education movement had dissipated. The Black studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s was heavily influenced by the earlier works of African American scholars during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While fighting for desegregation during the 1960s and 1970s, some people began to call for Black studies in schools to empower the advancement of African Americans (Banks, 2004). When educational institutions began to respond to the appeal for curriculum changes, other marginalized groups (Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans) began to demand the same (Sleeter, 2018). These marginalized groups began to resist assimilation and wanted their culture and heritage preserved as well (Sultanova, 2016). As a result, there was a plethora of materials reprinted in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some examples of popular reprints include *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin and *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. DuBois. It was also during this time period that earlier works from authors of Color were published. Some examples of these works include *History of the Negro Race in America* by George Washington Williams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United*

States by Carey McWilliams, *Filipino Immigration to the Continental United States and Hawaii* by Bruno Lasker, *Brothers Under the Skin* by Carey McWilliams, and *America Is in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan. During this important time, books were also available that told stories of struggle for marginalized groups in the United States. Some of the significant works in this genre include *Japanese Americans* by Harry H. L. Kitano, *The Story of the Chinese in America* by Betty Lee, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* by Rudy Acuna, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* by Vine Deloria, Jr., and *The Rise of Unmeltable Ethics* by Michael Novak (Banks, 2004).

It was also during this time that organizations like the National Council for Social Studies, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education led campaigns to support the inclusion of ethnic content into the curriculum (Sultanova, 2016). In 1977, Standards for Accreditation of Teacher Education by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) stated compulsory use of multicultural education course and programs by all NCATE members. Additionally, NCATE and the United States Department of Education stated that coursework on multicultural education should be included into the teacher education programs (Sultanova, 2016). Also in 1977, the term "multicultural education" was included into the International Dictionary of Education for the first time and defined as "a situation of interaction among those studying with unfamiliar cultural elements and realities" (Sultanova, 2016).

The inclusion of multicultural education in classrooms across the United States is a hard-fought battle that is still taking place. Since it is thoroughly researched and well

documented, it seems natural that a population becoming increasingly more diverse would eagerly adopt a way of teaching and curriculum that supports its people; however, as substantiated above, this type of change has been difficult in the United States. A mainstream-centric approach to teaching supports the existing social, economic, and political structure; different perspectives challenge that structure. If different perspectives are acknowledged, change would be appropriate and encouraged (Banks, 2016). This kind of change can be uncomfortable and reveal parts of history many would like to forget.

Cultural Competence

Moule (2012) asserted, "Most teachers regularly, although unknowingly, discriminate against culturally different students by lacking the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills necessary to teach them properly" (p. 5). She gave the following particularly poignant example:

> Mrs. Gussman is one of the best English teachers in the school. She spends every weekend reading her immigrant students' compositions and making careful comments in red ink. To soften her criticisms, she says something positive before writing suggestions for improvement, using the students' names to make the comments more personable. "Jae Lee, these are fine ideas." These red-inked notes send shock waves through the families of her Korean students, but Mrs. Gussman is unaware of this until the principal calls her into the office. She is told that—Koreans, particularly those who are Buddhists, only write a person's name in red at the time of death or at the anniversary of a death. Therefore, to see the names of their children in red terrified the Korean parents. (Moule, 2012, p. 1)

Mrs. Gussman is a great teacher who means well but still unintentionally offended her students and their families. Consistent cultural competence discussions and professional development could help ensure Mrs. Gussman does not make similar mistakes in the future.

There are many definitions of cultural competence. However, when researching the term, one most often comes across the definition described by Cross et al. (1989), "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 28). The work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989), funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, Child and Adolescent Service System Program, was completed to "assure that system service development takes place in a culturally appropriate way in order to meet the needs of culturally and racially diverse groups" (p. iii). This monograph, prepared for the mental health sector, is readily applicable to education. Cross et al. (1989) stated, "the cultural competence model explored in this monograph is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. iv). The work was intended to support African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans due to their "limited access to economic or political power" (Cross et al., 1989, p. iii). Cross et al. (1989) described a continuum with six phases: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency.

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum

Cultural Destructiveness

At the far, most negative end of the continuum is cultural destructiveness, which "is represented by attitudes, policies, and practices that are destructive to cultures and consequently to the individuals within the culture" (Cross et al., 1989, p. 14). Similarly, Lindsey et al. (2019) defined cultural destructiveness as "any policy, practice, or behavior that effectively eliminates another people's culture; it may be manifested through an organization's policies and practices or through an individual's values and behaviors" (p. 133). Historical examples of cultural destructiveness include ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide, such as the Nazis' efforts to eliminate the Jewish people and other "undesirables" during World War II and the institution of slavery in the United States. Examples of cultural destructiveness seen in schools include English-only policies that forbid the use of students' native language at school, tracking programs that disproportionately assign ethnic groups to lower level courses, and dress policies that single out ethnic groups (Lindsey et al., 2019).

Cultural Incapacity

Cross et al. (1989) described cultural incapacity as when "the system or agencies do not intentionally seek to be culturally destructive but rather lack the capacity to help minority clients or communities … such agencies are often characterized by ignorance and an unrealistic fear of people of color" (p. 15). Cultural incapacity could also be considered the belief in the superiority of one culture while disempowering others (Lindsey et al., 2019). Examples of cultural incapacity in history include the Jim Crow laws designed to discriminate against African Americans, the Chinese Exclusion Act

which restricted immigration for Asians and Pacific Islanders, and more recently, President Trump's effort to ban travel to the United States from Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, North Korea, and Venezuela.

Cultural Blindness

In the middle of the continuum, cultural blindness can be described as the belief that color and culture are irrelevant because all people are the same and should be treated equally. Cross et al. (1989) explained,

> Culturally-blind agencies are characterized by the belief that helping approaches traditionally used by the dominant culture are universally applicable; if the system worked as it should, all people—regardless of race of culture—would be served with equal effectiveness. This view reflects a well-intended liberal philosophy; however, the consequences of such a belief are to make services so ethnocentric as to render them virtually useless to all but the most assimilated people of color. (p. 15)

The unintended consequence of those that profess to be color or culture blind is a feeling of invisibility. An example of this phase is discussed in the introduction to Chapter 1 of this dissertation where a colleague stated that they did not "see" me as being Black.

Cultural Pre-Competence

Next on the continuum, is cultural pre-competence, which is when there are efforts to utilize appropriate behaviors and practices, but there is also awareness that there is still more to learn; it is characterized by "movement" (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 137). The danger at this point on the continuum is "a false sense of accomplishment or of failure that prevents the agency from moving forward along the continuum" (Cross et al.,

1989, p. 16). Some examples of the cultural pre-competence phase include considering a soul food meal during Black History Month or hiring People of Color in a predominately White environment without providing support or altering the environment to be more receptive proof of cultural competence (Lindsey, et al., 2019).

Cultural Competence

Surprisingly, cultural competence is the fifth stage on the cultural competence continuum, not the sixth and final one. As defined by Cross et al. (1989), the cultural competence stage is

> characterized by acceptance and respect for difference, continuing self-assessment regarding culture, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and a variety of adaptations to service models in order to better meet the needs of minority populations. (p. 17)

A school in this stage of the continuum values cultural competence and espouses its principles by including it as an important component of various important school documents such as mission statements, core values and teacher evaluations. An additional example includes Montana's Indian Education for All legislation (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 139).

Cultural Proficiency

The last stage of the continuum is the optimum level of cultural competence, cultural proficiency. Organizations in this phase "advocate for cultural competence throughout the system and for improved relations between cultures throughout society" (Cross et al., 1989, p. 17).

Cross et al. (1989) discussed the importance of attitudes, policies, and practices in the journey to cultural proficiency. Building on the work of Cross et al. (1989), Lindsey et al. (2019) developed phrases to succinctly describe each stage of the continuum:

- Stage 1: Cultural Destructiveness—See the Difference; Stomp It Out
- Stage 2: Cultural Incapacity—See the Difference; Make It Wrong
- Stage 3: Cultural Blindness—See the Difference; Dismiss It
- Stage 4: Cultural Precompetence—See the Difference; Recognize What You Don't Know
- Stage 5: Cultural Competence—See the Difference; Understand the Difference That Difference Makes
- Stage 6: Cultural Proficiency—See the Differences; Respond Positively and Affirmingly

  (Lindsey et al., 2019)

Related Research

Multiple EBSCOhost searches were done and hundreds of articles reviewed to gain a better understanding of recent action research studies on cultural competence in school settings. Surprisingly, even when "cultural competence," "professional development," and "school" were used as part of the query, many of the scholarly articles took place in the medical field and involved social workers or mental health professionals rather than educators. Many articles addressed higher education, very few focused on the early elementary years and none took place in an independent school.

An article by Dejaeghere and Zhang (2008) described an action research study closest to this one conducted in the Midwest. In this study, seven of the nine participating

schools were elementary or elementary/middle schools. Research questions for this study included,

1. Which factors in a teacher in-service professionals development initiative, based on the DMIS and IDI, are related to teachers' perceived intercultural competence scores?
2. To what extent do the professional development variables, such as having a group profile or an individual profile, explain the variance measured on the scale of teachers' perceived intercultural competence? (Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008, p. 256)

Similar to the work of Cross et al. (1989) as well as Lindsey et al. (2019), M. J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) described cultural differences in six stages: denial of difference, defense toward difference, minimization of difference, acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference, and integration of a bicultural or multicultural worldview (Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008, p. 257). The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was developed by Hammer and Bennet and determined one's "construction of cultural difference" on the continuum described above (Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008, p. 257). The IDI provided

> individual and group profiles, with each of the scale scores indicating the construction of difference in a scale. Sharing the individual and group profiles with teachers provides an understanding of the process of intercultural development, and gives insight into one's own or one's group's current developmental strengths and challenges. (Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008, p. 257)

The sample for this study was large; 352 teachers and teachers' aides (of 453) responded to the survey that assessed intercultural competence. Of the 352 teachers that responded to the survey, 284 had taken the initial IDI administered in early 2004, at the same time that the professional development initiatives began. The study concluded, "both professional development about the DMIS model and other professional development are positively correlated to intercultural competence" (Dejaeghere & Zhang, 2008, p. 264).

An additional study conducted by Smith and Bahr (2014) added to the literature on the effectiveness of professional development to advance the cultural competence of practitioners. In Smith and Bahr's study, Desimone's model for teacher PD was used as the conceptual framework for school-based mental health professionals in a large, urban school district in the south. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of a needs assessment on the preparation of the cultural-competency PD?
2. For those participating in the cultural-competency PD session, what is their assessment of the training's effectiveness?
3. To what extent are gains in cultural competence by school-based mental health professionals sustained 12 weeks after implementation? (Smith & Bahr, 2014, p. 166)

This study had two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a needs assessment followed by professional development planning while Phase 2 included the professional development and an evaluation of it. The data collected in Phase 1 included a needs assessment, the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey (MAKSS), and a demographic survey. The MAKSS "is a self-report instrument designed to assess multicultural awareness,

knowledge and skill. The MAKSS contains 60 Likert items and requires approximately 25 minutes to complete. Each item is rated on a four-point scale (e.g., very limited, limited, good, very good)" (Smith & Bahr, 2014, p. 168). The data collected in Phase 2 included the PD evaluation and an additional MAKSS. The PD evaluation had five questions. The first three asked if the PD contributed to the participants' awareness, knowledge, skills. The fourth question asked if the activities were helpful, and the last question asked for recommendations for the future. Of the 75 school mental health professionals who participated in professional development, 57 agreed to participate in the study. Due to district reassignments, roughly half of the original participants (26) completed the post strategy MAKSS 12 weeks following the professional development.

Each of the research inquiries was addressed. First, the needs assessment data helped ensure the professional development addressed the participants' specific needs. Second, Smith and Bahr (2014) asserted, "a central finding from this study is the importance of providing participants with opportunities to explore their own cultural perspectives, assumptions, biases and stereotypes" (p. 178). Further, "results from the training evaluation indicated that participants found the cultural competency training most helpful in increasing self-awareness of how their own cultural background and life experiences have influenced attitudes, beliefs and biases." (Smith & Bahr, 2014, pp. 178–179). Last, the study showed significant changes between the pre and post MAKSS, indicating that "12 weeks after training, cultural competence among a subsample of the mental health professionals increased in the domains of awareness, knowledge, and skills" (Smith & Bahr, 2014, p. 179).

A third study conducted by Nelson and Guerra (2014) explored teachers' and school leaders' cultural knowledge. This study had three objectives:

1. Identify the beliefs practicing educators hold about culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and families
2. Assess educator knowledge of culture
3. Understand how educators apply cultural knowledge in practice (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 72)

There were 111 participants of this study: 73 school leaders and 38 teachers. The participants came from two suburban school districts, one in Texas and the other in Michigan. A unique feature of this study is the inclusion of school leaders as participants. School leaders who participated in this study included principals, central office staff, and executive team members from both districts. The teachers all came from the Texas district and included elementary, middle, and high school teachers. These districts had experienced demographic shifts from predominately White student populations to more economically and ethnically diverse student populations. While there had been a shift in student demographics, roughly 90% of the teachers and administrators in both districts were White.

The instrument used to analyze the beliefs of the educators included nine "scenarios centering on schooling such as instruction, curriculum, and building relationships with students and families" (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, pp. 73–74). Participants were asked what was happening in each scenario as well as if they were there, how would they respond and why. This instrument was administered before a year-long diversity training program. The researchers applied a constructivist grounded theory

approach to code the responses. Five categories of cultural awareness were developed during the coding process from the participants' responses: culturally unaware, little awareness of culture, general awareness of culture, culturally aware, and culturally responsive. The study concluded > 1% of the participants were culturally responsive; 3% were culturally aware; 44% had a general awareness of culture; 39% had little awareness of cultural, and 14% were culturally unaware. Further, it was also determined that 72% of the participants "exhibited one of more deficit beliefs about students and families of diverse backgrounds" (Nelson & Guerra, 2014, p. 78). Nelson and Guerra (2014) stressed,

> creating programs that build cultural competence among educators also requires integrating cultural knowledge and skills into all program content and experiences. Learning of this nature must become the work of all who are involved in preparation programs and professional development experiences. This work cannot be left to a select few. (p. 91)

Summary

The problem of practice the current study pursued is the lack of consistent discourse amongst faculty members on cultural competence in an early elementary independent school setting. Contributing factors to this problem of practice include the sociopolitical context of education as well as organizational capacity for change. Culturally responsive teaching, multicultural education, and cultural competence are all incredibly meaningful equity endeavors. I wanted to focus on work that promoted acceptance and respect of difference coupled with continuous reflection and cultural knowledge expansion. After researching all three, cultural competence was determined to be the choice for this action research study. A review of scholarly literature to find related

works that address the problem of practice in a unique setting was unsuccessful. However, certain features of the three studies described in this chapter can be seen in this exploration. I conducted an initial assessment to guide the targeted dialogue sessions, administered a measure before and after the strategy, learned from the participants about what was most effective, and received recommendations for the future, all components also found in the work reviewed in this chapter. Viewed from a critical social reconstructionist-hermeneutic phenomenological approach, this action research study contributed to the gap in the literature on the topics of cultural competence in early elementary independent schools. It will influence professional development to enable teachers in this setting to reach an increasingly diverse student population.

Chapter 3

Methodology

> Phenomenological researchers like to study obvious things—not for sport, but in order to potentially help us see and understand things in new ways. To reveal things that have become so 'normal' that we do not even notice what might be at work and what might be assumed. (Vagle, 2018, p. 10)

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to give a detailed account of the methodology employed in this action research study. In the world of education, there are many competing initiatives vying for the valuable professional development time available to educators. As adults preparing students for a global society, it is imperative that teachers help students develop cultural competency. Unfortunately, many educators lack cultural competency. The problem of practice this action research study sought to address is the lack of consistent discourse on cultural competence amongst early childhood educators in an independent school setting. To ensure that students receive appropriate guidance, it is necessary to intentionally and consistently provide opportunities for the adults tasked with preparing these young minds for the future to have discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics that impact cultural competence.

Research Questions

The overarching research question in this phenomenological study was: how do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher

opinions on cultural competence? Additional research subquestions included determining:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which session is most impactful for participants and why
- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

The chapter begins with an overview of action research, followed by a detailed discussion on the chosen methodology. Validity is addressed next. The setting of the study as well as my role within that setting follows. Subsequently, I discussed ethical considerations taken into account during this action research process. After an explanation of how I selected the participants and a brief description of each, I examined the data collection measures. Thereafter, I reviewed a detailed account of the action research process. An analysis of the plan to examine the data follows. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Research Design

Rationale for Selected Methodology

Herr and Anderson (2015) asserted, "Insider researchers often collaborate with other insiders as a way to do research that not only might have greater impact on the setting, but also has the potential to be more democratic" (p. 45). During this exploration I facilitated three DEI dialogue sessions in order to determine their effectiveness in

increasing the cultural competence of early elementary teachers in this independent school setting. This investigation is a prime example of action research. Herr and Anderson (2015) explained,

> Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but never to or on them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that it is deliberately and systematically undertaken, and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions. (pp. 3–4)

Action research is different from traditional research because of its constructivist, situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical nature (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Qualitative Design: Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Due to my principal interest in the experiences of participants in a specific setting, as well as the meaning they make from said experiences, I used a qualitative methodology. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (p. 23).

Each participants' responses differed depending on their individual experiences. As such, this study employed a phenomenological design to honor the individual experiences of the participants. Specifically, this study utilized a hermeneutic phenomenology. The origins of its namesake are rooted in Greek mythology. Bynum and Varpio (2018) explained,

> Hermes was responsible for delivering messages among the Greek gods and to the mortal world, and for interpreting those messages and conveying their underlying

> meaning. Hermeneutic phenomenology, like the messenger god with whom it shares its lexical root, is a qualitative research methodology that goes beyond describing a phenomenon to exploring and conveying its meaning in the context of everyday life. (p. 252)

Further, Bynum and Varpio (2018) discussed three characteristics of hermeneutic phenomenology that distinguish it from other qualitative methodologies. First, "its interpretive nature and focus on lived experience" (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 252). Second, "the inclusion of research experiences in the processes of data collection and analysis" (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 252). Lastly, "the dynamic, thoughtful process of reflecting and writing that guides data analysis" (Bynum & Varpio, 2018, p. 252).

The triplicate theoretical framework employed in this action research study is a critical social reconstructionist-hermeneutic phenomenological approach, focusing on both the experiences and interpretations of those experiences. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015) stated, "a researcher undertaking a phenomenological study investigates various reactions to, or perceptions of, a particular phenomenon" (p. 430). Phenomenon can be defined as "the ways in which we find ourselves being in relation to the world through our day-to-day living" (Vagle, 2018, p. 20). In this action research study, the phenomena of interest are targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics.

Research Design Validity

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015), validity can be defined as "the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect" (p. 149). To obtain a useful measure of

the information sought in this study, I developed the questionnaires and journal entry questions. With regard to instruments, this certainly lessens the reliability of the assessment; however, it increases its content validity. As stated by Efron and Ravid (2013),

> In most cases, tests created by teachers cannot compete with those created by the experts in terms of reliability. On the other hand, teacher-made tests are likely to have higher content validity because they are written by the classroom teachers who know best what was taught in class and who recognize their students' culture, language, and level of understanding. (p. 151)

I enhanced the content-related evidence of validity by ensuring a University of South Carolina professor and the Institutional Review Board review the questionnaires.

There are many possible threats to the internal validity of a study. Some of the most common threats to internal validity include subject characteristics, mortality, location, instrumentation, testing, history, maturation, subject attitude, regression, and implementation Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 181). To minimize some of these threats, I:

- accepted additional people into the study (mortality threat)
- standardized the data collection by using Google Forms© to collect questionnaire and journal data (instrumentation threat)
- allowed participants to complete questionnaires and journal entries at the time and in a place of their choosing (location threat)

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015) also asserted, "qualitative researchers use a number of techniques, therefore, to check their perceptions to ensure that they are not being misinformed" (p. 456). To enhance the validity and reliability of this study, I used the

participants' own words as data to lessen the chance of researcher bias, collected journal entries after each session, and practiced reflexivity throughout.

Context and Setting of Study

This study took place at a large, prekindergarten–12th grade, independent school in the southeast region of the United States. This school, which will be referred to as Oakwood (pseudonym), is comprised of five smaller schools: an early elementary school with grades prekindergarten through third, an upper elementary school with Grades 4 through 6, a middle school with seventh and eighth grade, a high school with Grades 9 through 12, and an additional campus in another part of town with grades prekindergarten through six. Oakwood has a long tradition of excellence and graduates 100% of its seniors to four-year institutions. The student body of Oakwood is incredibly diverse. With a 2019–2020 enrollment of 2,505 students, approximately 44.5% are Caucasian, 51.6% are People of Color (including Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino, and two or more races), while 3.9% did not specify. Conversely, the demographics for the faculty follow: 79.8% Caucasian and 20.2% People of Color (including Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino, and two or more races).

Role of the Researcher

I am an administrator at the building in which this action research study took place. This made for an interesting dynamic. Due to the sensitive subject matter, I was concerned about the participants' comfort level with an administrator present. In order to

contest this potentially uncomfortable power dynamic, I distributed open-ended questionnaires to participants in lieu of interviews. I did this because I believed the participants would feel more comfortable if they could answer the questions alone and at the time and place of their choosing.

I brought my own strong beliefs regarding the importance of cultural competence, particularly for educators, to this critical social reconstructionist Hermeneutic phenomenological action research study. These beliefs were instrumental in my choice of methodology. I attended a predominately White, independent school for grades 6 through 12. I experienced an environment that did not value cultural competence firsthand. Now that I am an administrator in an independent school, I want to ensure that cultural competence is a priority. I conducted this inquiry to gauge the views of the faculty on cultural competence and to improve practice in this setting. The results will help plan future targeted dialogue sessions for the faculty.

Ethical Considerations

Before undertaking this study, I carefully considered all potential risks to participants. Specifically, there are three areas that all researchers should contemplate when planning a study: "protecting participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality of research data, and the question of deception of subjects" (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 63). To ensure all participants understood the full scope of the investigation, I held an informational meeting to describe the study and discuss participant requirements. I reviewed how information would be protected during the study and afterwards. I collected data submitted by participants (questionnaires and journal entries) confidentially and electronically. These collection procedures virtually eradicated the risk

of transcription error. I stored the data in NVivo software. During the meeting, all interested parties had the opportunity to ask questions, which I answered thoroughly and honestly. Volunteers in this action research study incurred minimal risk. The only potential discomfort involved was regarding the subject matter (topics included: culture, bias, privilege, prejudice, racism, etc.). There was no deception involved in this inquiry. Lastly, I made clear to the interested parties that participants have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without retribution.

Participants

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). I used purposeful sampling to secure volunteer participants for the study. Approximately three weeks before the study was set to begin, I placed a brief description of the study in the weekly announcements for faculty members (see Appendix A). The entry encouraged anyone interested to attend an informational meeting the following week. At the informational meeting, I reviewed the purpose, procedure, and commitment requirements for the study (see Appendices B-C). As an added incentive, volunteers received a $50 gift card at the end of the study for their time and successful fulfillment of all requirements. Following the meeting, interested parties had one week to commit to the study. I hoped to secure five to seven volunteers for the investigation but ended up with nine.

Each participant chose a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality and enable the researcher to analyze data throughout the study. After seeing some of the chosen

pseudonyms, one may guess that the targeted dialogue sessions began the week following Super Bowl LIV. Brief vignettes of each participant follow.

Participant 1: Jennifer Lopez (JL)

Jennifer Lopez (JL) self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Caucasian and fell in the 45–54 age bracket. JL had obtained a master's degree and had worked in the field of education for 11–15 years, with 11–15 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, JL's response was, "Our diverse student body, my perception that we have a culturally incompetent faculty, societal racism and how it affects our student body and faculty."

Participant 2: Shakira

Shakira self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as African American and fell in the 35–44 age bracket. Shakira had obtained a master's degree and had worked in the field of education for 16–20 years, with 6–10 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Shakira's response was, "Always willing to be a team player and of course I want to help the person doing the study:-)"

Participant 3: Mojo

Mojo self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Caucasian and fell in the over 55 age bracket. Mojo had obtained a master's degree and had worked in the field of education for over 21 years, with 16–20 of those years being in

an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Mojo's response was, "I wanted to learn more about this subject".

Participant 4: Sherre

Sherre self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Black and fell in the over 45–54 age bracket. Sherre had obtained a master's degree and had worked in the field of education for 16–20 years, with 11–15 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Sherre's response was, "I want to be more sensitive to the needs of others. I also want to change the environment so that others are also sensitive to me. The world is changing and I would like to help that change be for the better!!"

Participant 5: Mindy

Mindy self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as White American and fell in the over 55 age bracket. Mindy had obtained a master's degree and had worked in the field of education for over 21 years, with over 21 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Mindy's response was, "To develop a better understanding of how to promote positive cultural ethnicity for success in the classroom."

Participant 6: Grace

Grace self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Hispanic and fell in the 45–54 age bracket. Grace had obtained a bachelor's degree and had worked in the field of education for 16–20 years, with 16–20 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation

in this study, Grace's response was, "When I moved to [city name] I become the minority and suddenly I realized that most people see me as a 'White' person because they don't know me or what I have been through in my life. I have come to realize my biases and want to help others realize their own individual biases and see people as individuals."

Participant 7: Ticonderoga

Ticonderoga self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Native American and fell in the 45–54 age bracket. Ticonderoga had obtained a specialist's degree and had worked in the field of education for 16–20 years, with 6–10 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Ticonderoga's response was, "have an interest in learning more, helping out, [with an] important topic."

Participant 8: Spring

Spring self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as African American and fell in the 35–44 age bracket. Spring had obtained a bachelor's degree and had worked in the field of education for 6–10 years, with 6–10 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Spring's response was, "Diversity, equity and inclusion is something that I am passionate about. I enjoy learning about this topic, and I am interested in hearing other people's perspectives."

Participant 9: Sally Who

Sally Who self-identified with she/her/hers pronouns. She described her ethnicity as Caucasian and fell in the 45–54 age bracket. Sally Who had obtained a bachelor's

degree and had worked in the field of education for 16–20 years, with 6–10 of those years being in an independent school setting. When asked what factors contributed to her participation in this study, Sally Who's response was, "I truly want to be the change I hope to see in the world. I want to be the friend, teacher, and citizen that those I meet along life's journey need me to be. I truly value people and want to live in a world where people know they are valued and accepted for who they are no matter the differences are between us."

Data Collection, Tools, and Instruments

I obtained various forms of data during this action research study, including questionnaires, volunteer participant journal entries, various documents from the dialogue sessions (meeting designs, handouts, etc.), observation notes, and my reflexive journal.

Prior to the first session, I distributed an initial pre-questionnaire (Appendix D) to all participants. This collected pertinent information to develop a brief description for each participant and provide background information to inform the targeted dialogue sessions. I developed this questionnaire based on the research question and subquestions. The questionnaire included the following:

1. What is your age? (ranges given)
2. What pronouns do you use?
3. How do you describe your ethnicity?
4. What is your highest level of education?
5. How many years have you worked in education (public and/or private)? (ranges given)

6. How many of those years have you worked in an independent school? (ranges given)
7. Did your teacher preparation program include any multicultural education or cultural competence courses?
8. How do you define cultural competence?
9. How important is cultural competence to you as an educator? (Likert Scale 1–5)
    - 1 – Not important at all
    - 5 – Extremely important
10. What do you do to further your knowledge in this area?
11. What factors contributed to your participation in this study?

Table 3.1 *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment*

Abbreviation	Competency Level	Description
U	Unfamiliar	The information is totally new to me
AW	Awareness	I have heard about it, but I do not know its full scope, such as its principal components, applications, and modifications
K	Knowledge	I know enough about this to write or talk about it I know what it is, but I am not ready to use it. I need practice and feedback.
AP	Application	I am ready to apply or have applied this information in my own work and/or life
F	Facilitation	I am ready to work with other people to help them learn this. I feel confident enough to demonstrate and/or teach this to others, yet I know that my learning is a lifelong process.

I chose a cultural competence self-assessment (see Table 3.1 and Appendix E), found in Jean Moule's (2012) *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators, Second Edition*,

to ascertain a baseline on the participants' cultural competence. The self-assessment allowed me to adjust professional development sessions to the needs of the participants. In the text, the author noted that "this survey may be copied and freely used" (Moule, 2012, p. 25). The Cultural Competence Self-Assessment used the following key to rate the competencies of participants currently as well as where they want to be.

Competencies included:

1. I am aware of the problem of language, images, and situations that suggest that most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same (e.g., "All Asians are good at math").
2. I substitute factual and meaningful information for ethnic clichés. For example, I avoid using terms and adjectives that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes.
3. I try to address stereotypical statements when I hear them used by others.
4. I avoid patronizing and tokenism of any racial or ethnic group (e.g., "One of my best friends is Black").
5. I understand the histories of oppressed groups (Native American, African American, Latino/Chicano, Asian/Pacific American) in the United States.
6. I thoughtfully view books and films to see if all groups are fairly represented.
7. I am aware of how my membership in different groups influences the power that I possess, and I am aware of how to constructively use that power.
8. I understand racial identity development. I know how to evaluate personal attitudes, emotions, and actions around my own racism and prejudices.

9. For White individuals: I am conscious of my White racial identity and its relationship to racial oppression I the United States. I think critically about what it means to be White in this country.
10. For Individuals of Color: I am conscious of my racial identity development and its relationship to racial oppression in the United States. I think critically about what it means to be of Color in this country. (Moule, 2012, pp. 24–25)

During the study, participants were asked to complete a journal entry (see Appendix F) after each session. I also reflected in a reflexive journal. The journal entry questions for the participants included:

1. What new learning emerged from today's session?
2. How did you feel during the session? Comfortable? Uncomfortable? Why?
3. What will you take from this session?
4. What could be done to improve this session?

At the end of the study, I asked participants to complete a second questionnaire (Appendix G):

1. How do you define cultural competence now?
2. How important is it to you as an educator? (Likert Scale 1-5)
    - 1 – Not important at all
    - 5 – Extremely important
3. Where do you feel you fall on the cultural proficiency continuum?
4. How do you plan to further your knowledge in this area?

5. What do you think can be done to further the cultural competence of our faculty?
6. If you had the decision to participate in these sessions again, would you? Why or why not?
7. Which was your favorite session? Why?
8. Which was your least favorite session? Why?
9. What topics do you feel should be covered in future sessions?
10. Is there any other information regarding the sessions that you would like to share?

Research Procedure

The timeline for this action research study had two iterations. Table 3.2 gives details for the initial timeline:

Table 3.2 *Initial Timeline*

Date	Objectives
December 2019	Submit study to USC Institutional Review Board
January 2020	Meet with heads of school and building principal to review proposal and obtain approval to conduct study
February 2020	Put Advertisement in Faculty Bulletin four weeks prior to Informational Meeting
March 2020	Hold Informational Meeting, Finalize Participants, Distribute Pre-Questionnaire and Cultural Competence Self-Assessment
April 2020	Targeted Dialogues Sessions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Topics

After a review of the school calendar and further reflection, I determined that it would be more prudent to change the initial timeline to ensure there was adequate time to finish writing the dissertation. In hindsight, amidst the current global pandemic, this was an incredibly prudent decision. The adjusted timeline can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 *Adjusted Timeline*

Date	Objectives
December 2019	• 12/20/2019 – Obtained IRB Approval • 1/10/2020 – Met with heads of school and building principal to review proposal and obtain approval to conduct study
January 2020	• 1/16/2020 – Put advertisement in faculty bulletin one week prior to informational meeting • 1/23/2020 – Held informational meeting • 1/29/2020 – Distributed Doodle Poll to interested parties determine which dates worked best for the most people
February 2020	• 2/3/2020 – Finalized dates, Distributed Pre-Questionnaire and Cultural Competence Self-Assessment • 2/11/2020 – Dialogue Session 1 • 2/18/2020 – Dialogue Session 2 • 2/25/2020 – Dialogue Session 3
March 2020	• Distributed stipends to seven of nine participants*

* To maintain anonymity, I chose to wait until we were back in school to have my administrative assistant give the gift cards to the participants so I would not know the participants' pseudonyms. However, I didn't know we would not be returning to campus for the rest of the year due to Covid-19. I still have two gift cards.

This exploration began with securing approval from The University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board. I submitted an application in eIRB, an electronic application system, for an exempt review. Once I obtained IRB approval, since this study took place in an independent school, I set up a meeting to ask for permission to conduct the study from the heads of school (president and vice president) as well as the building administrator (principal). After school officials granted permission, I planned the informational meeting.

A week before the informational meeting, I included a brief description of the study as well as the date and time for the informational meeting in the weekly bulletin

(Appendix A) for faculty. Six faculty members attended the meeting. At the informational meeting, I reviewed the following:

1. Problem of practice
2. Research questions and subquestions
3. Commitment required for participants
    a. Pre-questionnaire
    b. Cultural competence self-assessment
    c. Attendance at three professional development sessions on multicultural competencies
        i. Session Topics – What Is Culture?, Know Your Lens, Cultural Competency and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum
        ii. It was noted that certain topics that could arise during sessions (bias, prejudice, privilege, discrimination) and could potentially cause discomfort
    d. Journal entries to be completed following each session
    e. Post-questionnaire
4. Stipend for completing all requirements
5. The option to withdraw at any time without consequence
    a. It should be noted that only participants that complete all requirements will receive the stipend.

After I distributed an infographic (Appendix B) and discussed the items in the outline, I allowed time for questions. After I answered all the questions, I passed out the invitation letter (Appendix C) and explained that those that wished to participate would have one

week to contact me via e-mail of their intent. Following the meeting, I placed the invitation letter in the mailboxes of all faculty members.

I hoped to secure five to eight volunteers to participate in the study but was willing to accept up to 10. Based on my prior knowledge of the after school and extracurricular commitments of the faculty as well as the time commitment required for this study, I believed it was highly unlikely to obtain more than 10 volunteers. Nine faculty members volunteered to participate in the action research study.

Approximately one week prior to the first session, I sent the participants the pre-questionnaire and cultural competence self-assessment (Appendices D-E). This gave me time to analyze the data and adjust sessions as necessary. I facilitated three sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics during this action research study. Details for each session can be found in Appendices H-J. Similar to how lesson plans go when teaching, the plan for the sessions are included, but they differed a bit from what actually took place. Table items in bold, italic text did not occur, but were part of the original plan. After each session, participants completed a guided journal entry (Appendix F) online to reflect and provide information about their experiences during each session. I administered an additional researcher-generated questionnaire (Appendix G) at the end of action research study to determine the effectiveness of the sessions and get feedback on how to enhance them in the future. I distributed questionnaires online to allow participants to complete them at their leisure. Furthermore, since I am an administrator in the building, I chose questionnaires in lieu of interviews to provide more anonymity to participants as they gave feedback on the dialogue sessions. Since I collected the questionnaire responses and journal entries online, transcripts were readily available for

analysis. I took observation notes during and following each session. Additionally, I made an entry in a reflexive journal following each session.

Data Analysis

In order to gain an understanding of early elementary, independent school educators' views on cultural competence during three targeted dialogue sessions, I coded and organized participant journal entries using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Additionally, I used pre and post questionnaire questions to address the research question and additional subquestions. I also analyzed volunteers' responses to these inquiries to reveal concepts. The concepts will help me improve, plan, and implement future dialogue sessions for the faculty.

Summary

There is little, if any, research in diverse, independent school settings regarding early elementary school teachers' opinions on cultural competence. The context of this study makes it unique. The purpose of this action research study was to examine the experiences of early elementary, independent school educators before, during, and after three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. I hoped to determine how these dialogue sessions impacted teacher opinions on cultural competence. To maximize the effect of each participants' experience, I utilized the qualitative methodology of phenomenology. I used purposive sampling methods and nine participants volunteered for this exploration. Researcher generated questionnaires, digital journal entries, session notes, and a researcher reflexive journal made up the data to be coded and organized using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The results of the

study will be used to help me design enhanced dialogue sessions and professional development for the future.

Chapter 4 reviews the data collected before, during, and after the three targeted dialogue sessions.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Analysis of Data

> Through participants' vivid depictions of their experiences, phenomenological researchers construct meaningful reality through data analysis. Phenomenological researchers pause and look at a phenomenon as the lived experience of some activity and illuminate its specific characteristic as experience rather than trying to turn it into an abstract structure and comparing it to other structures. (Peoples, 2021, p. 5)

Problem of Practice

The lack of consistent dialogue on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics in early elementary, independent schools is a missed opportunity. To prepare students to positively contribute to a diverse society, schools must provide teachers with the resources to support cultural competence so they can confidently teach the value of difference. This action research study pursued the following research question: How do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competence? Additional research subquestions include determining:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which targeted dialogue session is most impactful for participants and why

- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

Significance of Study

Administrators and teachers play an integral role in creating educational spaces where all students can feel safe, welcome, and valued. In order to help students become more comfortable discussing diversity, equity, and inclusion topics in the classroom, teachers must feel comfortable with these topics. Grant and Sleeter (2009) explained,

> We see other teachers who tend to overlook their students' identities and experiences, who teach as if their students were just like themselves. Still other teachers ignore and marginalize students who are different from themselves, or who are academically challenging. When the gap between teacher and student is not bridged, learning gets "turned off." (p. 3)

As a building administrator, it is my responsibility to ensure that there is appropriate dialogue and professional development available. This exploration was significant because it helped me reflect on how to facilitate and support consistent cultural competence work in my school.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the targeted dialogue sessions, followed by a detailed description of data. I collected a pre-questionnaire, cultural competence self-assessment, three digital journal entries, and a post-questionnaire were collected from participants. I also analyzed my own targeted dialogue session notes and reflexive journal entries. Next, the research question and additional subquestions will be

addressed with data from the study. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings.

Strategy

To address the lack of consistent dialogue on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics in my early elementary, independent school setting, I planned targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics to take place once a week for three consecutive weeks. The realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion is vast; it was a challenge to choose three topics. I sent the cultural competence self-assessment and pre-questionnaire digitally the week prior to the first session. The first session focused on culture, the second bias, and the third cultural competency as well as the cultural proficiency continuum. Each session was about 1 hour and 15 minutes and began with an activity followed by opportunities to share, reflect, and engage in dialogue. A detailed description of each session can be found in Appendices H-J.

Data Collection Methods

The findings of the data are organized by type. There is a review of the pre-questionnaire, cultural competence self-assessment, digital journal entries, post-questionnaire, session notes, and reflexive journal entries.

The data analysis process for this action research study was heavily influenced by the third edition of Johnny Saldaña's (2016) text, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Saldaña described a code in qualitative inquiry as "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data" (p. 4). There are

numerous coding methods used for qualitative inquiries; however, in vivo and concept coding were most appropriate for this action research study. Saldaña (2016) specified, "In Vivo Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and studies that prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (p. 106). I wanted the answers to my research questions to come from the participants. I used in vivo coding for the first round of coding for the participant journal entries and post-questionnaire, followed by a second round of concept coding. Saldaña (2016) further asserted, "cultural studies, sociopolitical inquiry, and critical theory may find value in Concept Coding since it stimulates reflection on broader social construct" (p. 120). Concept coding was also used for my session notes and reflexive journal entries.

Participant Pre-Questionnaire

Seven teachers and two teacher assistants volunteered to participate in this action research study. One of the first pieces of data collected from the participants was a pre-questionnaire to gather demographic, education, and professional data as well as answers to questions about cultural competence. While all the participants used she/her/hers pronouns, the group was somewhat diverse in terms of self-identified ethnicity, age, education, and experience. The self-identified ethnicities of the participants included Caucasian, African American, Black, White American, Hispanic, and Native American. The ages ranged from 35 to over 55. Three participants possessed bachelor's degrees, five possessed master's degrees, and one had a specialist degree. In terms of overall educational experience, two volunteers had over 21 years of experience, five had 16–20 years, one had 11–15 years, and one had 6–10. In terms of independent school

educational experience, one had over 21 years of independent school educational experience, two had 16–20 years, two had 11–15 years, and four had 6–10 years.

In addition to demographic and educational experience, the pre-questionnaire also gathered information on cultural competence. These inquiries included whether the participants' teacher preparation programs incorporated multicultural education or cultural competence courses, how they defined cultural competence, how important (on a Likert scale of 1–5) cultural competence was to them as an educator, what they did to further their knowledge in this area, and what factors contributed to their participation in this study. Two of the nine participants (22%) reported that their teacher preparation program incorporated multicultural education or cultural competence courses. The participants' definitions of cultural competence varied greatly; however, understanding/understand was found in seven of the nine responses. Most of the volunteers, six out of nine (67%), rated the importance of cultural competence to them as an educator at a 5, with two and then one rating as 4 and 3, respectively. When asked what the participants did to further their knowledge in this area, some responses included:

> *Grace*: I ask people questions and have an open mind about our differences. I pay attention to each individual's perceptions and try to understand why they feel the way they do. What has happened in their lives that has brought them to feel the way they do.
>
> *Sally Who*: I attend Diversity Equity and Inclusion Meetings at my current school. I try to read and watch videos shared by others to help me further understand their points of view. I have open and honest conversations with friends who are of different races, religions and cultural backgrounds than my own.

Sherre: I have attended meetings and workshops that have slightly touched upon what it means to be culturally competent. However, the best knowledge I've received comes from speaking directly with parents.

Ticonderoga: read up on other cultures, travel, attend festivals, friends from different backgrounds

A desire to learn more, hear more perspectives, be more sensitive to each other, passion for the subject matter, and our diverse student body were cited as some reasons the volunteers participated in this action research study. Appendix K contains the participants' responses to the questions on cultural competence.

Participant Cultural Competence Self-Assessment

The Cultural Competence Self-Assessment was administered electronically to participants to help me better determine their familiarity with cultural competence topics. The assessment was comprised of nine statements. The participants rated their familiarity with each statement as unfamiliar (U), awareness (AW), knowledge (K), application (AP), or facilitation (F). The self-assessment was developed by Jean Moule. Moule (2012) explained, "The survey is developmental. In relation to each dimension of cultural competence, it asks you to assess your cross-cultural knowledge as it currently exists and then the ultimate goal you set for yourself, no matter how challenging or distant" (p. 24). The nine statements with participant responses are presented in Figures 4.1–4.9.

1. I am aware of the problem of language, images, and situations that suggest that most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same (e.g., “All Asians are good at math”).

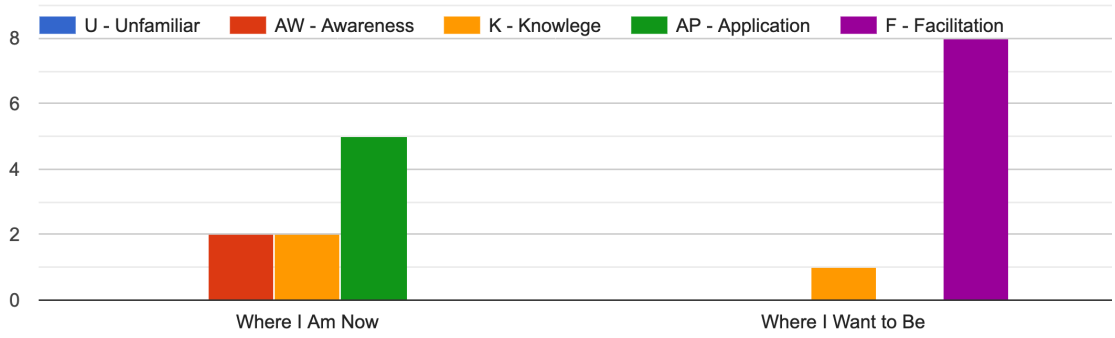

Figure 4.1. Language, images, and situations.

2. I substitute factual and meaningful information for ethnic clichés. For example, I avoid using terms and adjectives that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes.

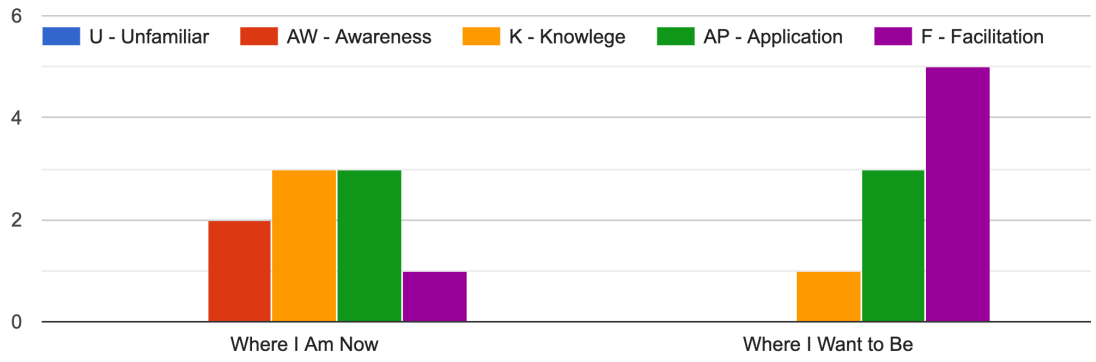

Figure 4.2. Substituting factual and meaningful information for ethnic clichés.

3. I try to address stereotypical statements when I hear them used by others. I avoid patronizing and tokenism of any racial or ethnic group (e.g. “One of my best friends is Black”).

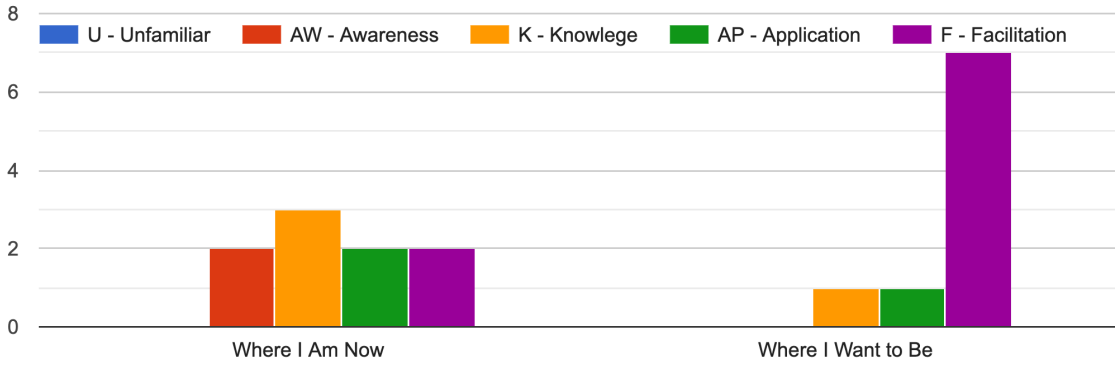

Figure 4.3 Addressing stereotypical statements/avoiding patronizing and tokenism.

4. I understand the histories of oppressed groups (Native American, African American, Latino/Chicano, Asian/Pacific American) in the United States.

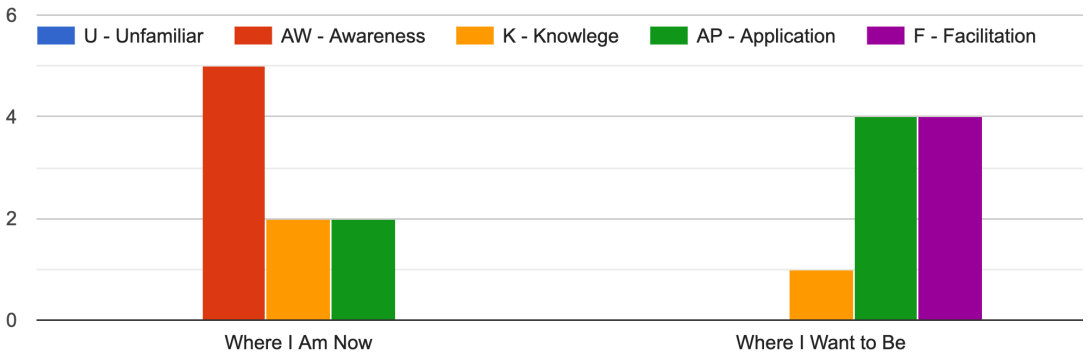

Figure 4.4. Understanding the histories of oppressed groups.

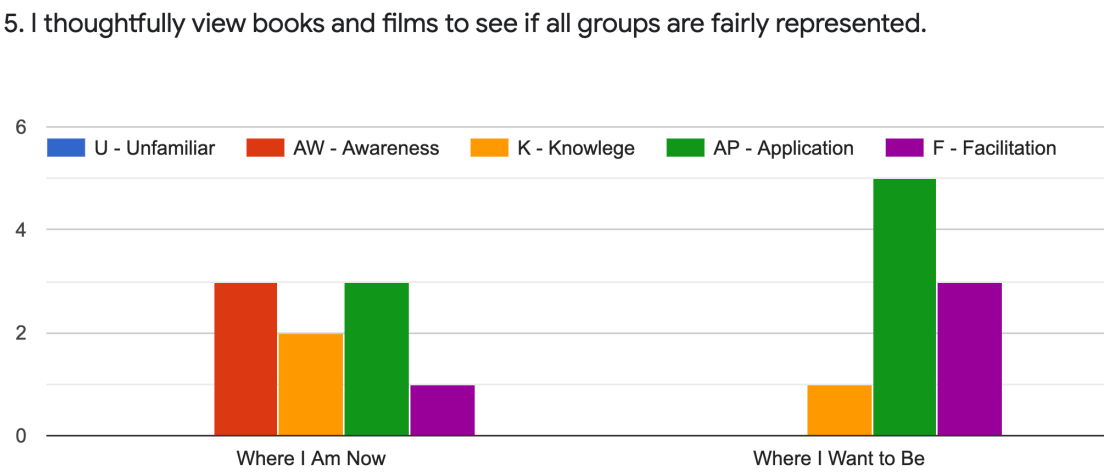

Figure 4.5. Thoughtfully viewing books and films for representation.

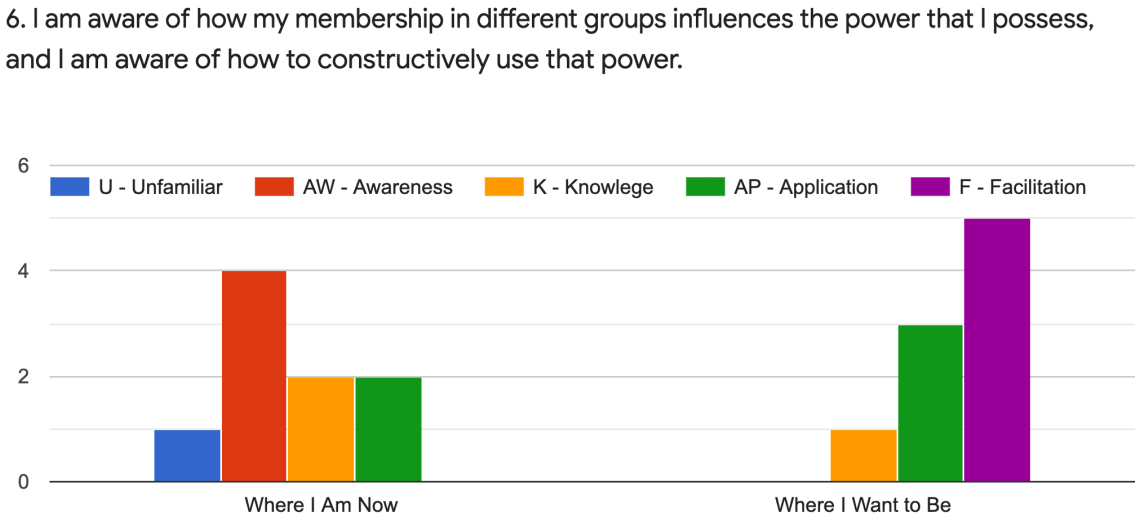

Figure 4.6. Power dynamics.

7. I understand racial identity development. I know how to evaluate personal attitudes, emotions, and actions around my own racism and prejudices.

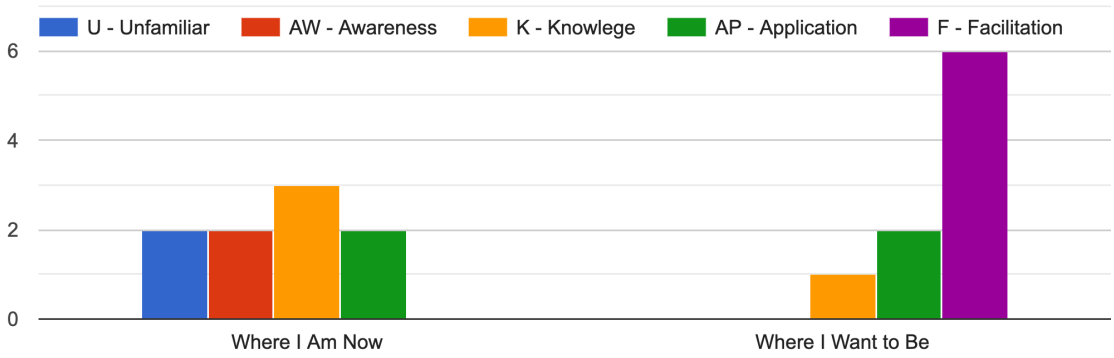

Figure 4.7 Racial identity development/evaluating personal attitudes, emotions, and actions around personal racism and prejudices.

8. For White individuals: I am conscious of my White racial identity and its relationship to racial oppression in the United States. I think c... about what it means to be White in this country.

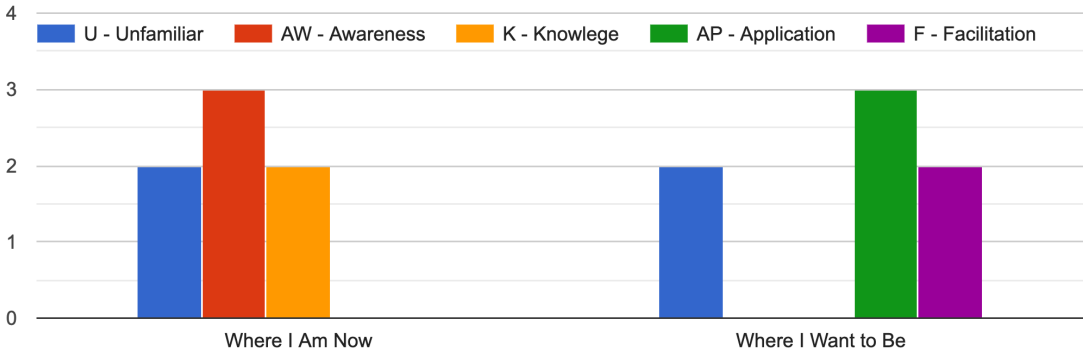

Figure 4.8. For White individuals: Racial identity and oppression in the United States.

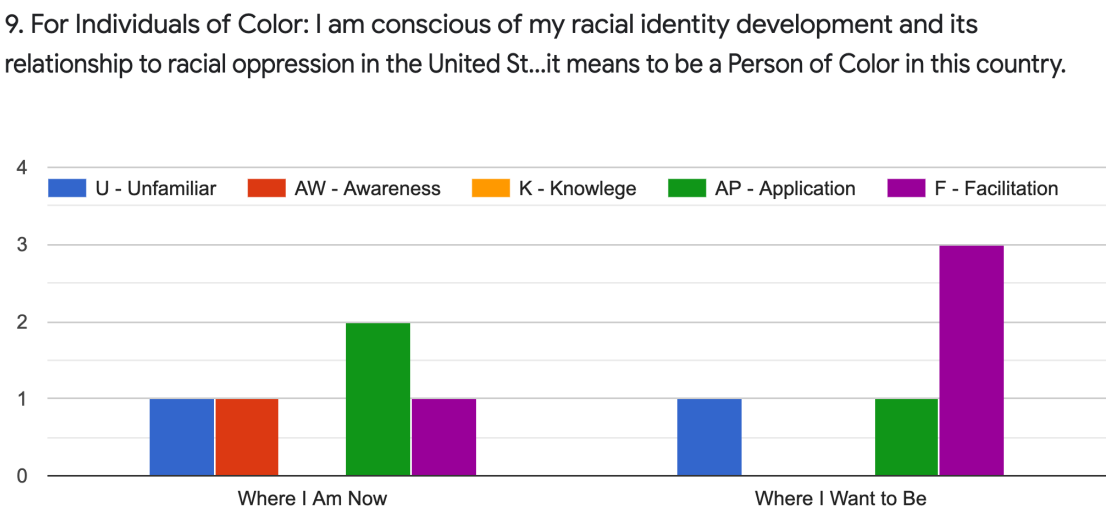

Figure 4.9. For Individuals of Color: Racial identity and oppression in the United States.

The self-assessment was not addressed in any of the targeted dialogue sessions. The results helped me appropriately plan the targeted dialogue sessions. One of the statements described a topic two participants were unfamiliar with: evaluating personal attitudes, emotions, and actions around my own racism and prejudices. This topic was addressed in the targeted dialogue session on bias. The following conclusions were derived from analyzing the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment data represented in Figures 4.1–4.9:

- There was not one statement where all nine participants desired to have a facilitation level of competence.
    - The closest (8/9) was the first statement regarding problematic language, images, and situations that suggest most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same.

    - The next closest (7/9) was the third statement regarding addressing stereotypical statements as well as avoiding patronizing and tokenism of any racial of ethnic group.
- The number of responses for Statements 8 and 9 does not match the demographic data.
    - I suspect that maybe the participants overlooked who was supposed to respond to Statements 8 and 9.
- There were two statements with topics that at least one participant was completely unfamiliar with.
    - How membership in different groups influences power and how to constructively use that power: 1 participant unfamiliar
    - Racial identity development; evaluating personal attitudes, emotions and actions around my own racism and prejudices: 2 participants unfamiliar
        - Addressed in Session 2 on bias

The follow questions were derived from the self-assessment:

- Are these educators satisfied with attaining a level of knowledge in these areas as opposed to a facilitation level of knowledge? Why?
- Did the participants fully understand the key?

Since these questions were not part of the original inquiry, they were left unanswered.

Participant Digital Journal Entries

Since I already knew that most of the teachers and teacher assistants in my school have multiple responsibilities outside of the classroom and my study would require three afternoons, I wanted to minimize the time commitment required. Secondly, due to my

position as one of the building administrators, I wanted to ensure the participants felt comfortable enough to express their true feelings about the session. These two concerns led to the decision that a digital journal entry was the best option. A digital journal entry allowed participants to reflect and respond at the time and place of their choosing. Additionally, not having an administrator present allowed participants to express thoughts they may have felt uncomfortable articulating in person.

To minimize misinterpretation, I determined that in vivo coding would be used for all data received from participants. NVivo software was used to organize the data from all three digital journal entries. Each journal entry asked four questions:

- What new learning emerged from today's session?
- How did you feel during the session? Comfortable? Uncomfortable? Why?
- What will you take from this session?
- What could be done to improve this session?

Using NVivo, I reviewed each question and in vivo coded the salient points. Next, I looked for patterns in each category (question) of in vivo codes to reveal concepts as well as outliers.

New Learning

The first category, new learning, had 17 codes for the first session. The 17 codes were sorted into three concepts in order of frequency: perspective, revelations, and culture with one outlier. In the second session, this category started with 16 codes and was condensed into four concepts. In frequency order, these concepts included bias, revelations, visual aid (bracelet), and preference. Interestingly, there were no outliers for the second session. The last session also started with 16 codes. The concepts revealed

were cultural proficiency continuum, revelations, and inclusion. There were two outlier codes remaining. In all, 49 individual codes were condensed into eight concepts with only one appearing in each session, learning.

Comfort Level

The second category, comfort level, had the most codes with 27. The first session codes were condensed by occurrence into four concepts. Safe space had the most incidences followed by revelations, relationships, and personal preferences all sharing the same number. This category had the most outliers with seven. Unique to this category is the ability to determine a consensus about the comfort level of the participants. While it was close, overall, participants were uncomfortable during the first session. In the second session there were 19 codes reduced to one overarching concept with four outliers. The concept revealed in this session was safe space. In terms of overall feelings about the session, the participants were much more comfortable during this session compared to the first. The last session had 15 codes. Similar to Session 2, most of these codes were either referencing comfortable or uncomfortable. The only concept present here was safe space with four outliers. The participants were the most comfortable during Session 3 with only one person mentioning feeling uncomfortable.

Take Aways

Take aways, the third category, had 16 codes in the first session. The codes were reduced to three concepts with four outliers. Two concepts, perspectives and relationships, had the same frequency followed closely by listening. There were also 16 codes in the second session. The concepts from this session, in order of occurrence, include bias, diversity, and revelations. There was only one outlier in Session 2. In the

last session, there were 14 codes, condensed into three concepts with two outliers. In order of frequency, cultural proficiency continuum, skills, and perspective were the concepts for this session.

Table 4.1 *Session Concept Frequency*

Category	Session 1 Concepts	Session 2 Concepts	Session 3 Concepts
New Learning	Perspective (8) Revelations (5) Culture (3)	Bias (6) Revelations (5) Visual Aid (3) Preference (2)	Cultural Proficiency Continuum (8) Revelations (4) Inclusion (2)
Comfort Level	*Overall Feeling: Uncomfortable* Safe Space (5) Personal Preference (2) Relationships (2)	*Overall Feeling: Comfortable* Safe Space (7)	*Overall Feeling: Comfortable* Safe Space (2)
Take Aways	Perspectives (4) Relationships (4) Listening (3)	Bias (9) Diversity (3) Revelations (3)	Cultural Proficiency Continuum (7) Skills (3) Perspective (2)
Improvements	Safe Space (5) Time Management (2)	More Discussion (3)	None (2) More Time (1)

Improvements

To adjust future targeted dialogue sessions, I wanted feedback on how to make them better. For the first session there were 10 codes in the improvement category. These 10 codes were reduced to two concepts, safe space and time management, with three outliers. Session 2 was interesting. There were 11 codes, but only one concept, more discussion. The feedback for this session was comprised of more observations and

descriptions of the session than actual comments on how to improve it. Much like the codes for Session 2, Session 3 had 14 and was mostly comprised of statements of appreciation rather than responses on how to improve the session. Two concepts, no improvements and more time, were derived from these codes. This was the only category where I created a concept from a code with only one occurrence, more time.

Participants Post Questionnaire

The post-questionnaire amassed the most data with 13 questions. Each question from the post-questionnaire was analyzed and reviewed.

How do you define cultural competence now? Initially, I was unsure of how to condense this information without taking too much away from the participants. Finally, I decided to separate the definitions into important concepts and actions to see if that revealed any patterns. An analysis of the concepts reveals the same number in the pre- and post-questionnaires. The concepts with the most occurrences in the pre-questionnaire include understanding, culture, different, and ethnicity. The concepts with the most occurrences in the post-questionnaire include different/differences, culture, continuum process, perspectives, ability, traditions, and beliefs. A review of the actions reveals 10 in the pre-questionnaire and 14 in the post-questionnaire. The actions with the most occurrences in the pre-questionnaire include understand and communicate. The actions with the most occurrences in the post-questionnaire include see/acknowledge, understand, and accept. Table 4.2 displays this information side by side for easier comparison.

Table 4.2 *Cultural Competence Concepts and Actions*

	Pre-Questionnaire Definition	**Post-Questionnaire Definition**
Concepts	21 - understanding (5), culture (4), different (3), ethnicity (2), knowledge, skills, individual, environment, race, religion, sexual preference, people, traditions, good, others, lives, appreciation, identity, ability, view, beliefs,	21 - different/differences (6), cultures (3), continuum/process (2), perspectives (2), ability (2), traditions (2), beliefs (2), willingness, customs, lens, identity, care, respect, sensitivity, attitudes, race, genders, ethnic groups, religion, aware, acceptance
Actions	10 - understand (3), communicate (2), work, be kind, relate, have been raised, have experienced, speak, appreciate, interact	14 - see/acknowledge (5), understand (3), accept (2), being aware, putting into practice, educating, differs, respect, looking, embracing, building awareness, communicate, interact

How important is cultural competence to you as an educator now? Before the targeted dialogue sessions, six out of nine participants valued cultural competence at a five on the scale. After the targeted dialogue sessions, the ratings from two participants increased, while one remained the same. Figure 4.10 provides visual representation of this information.

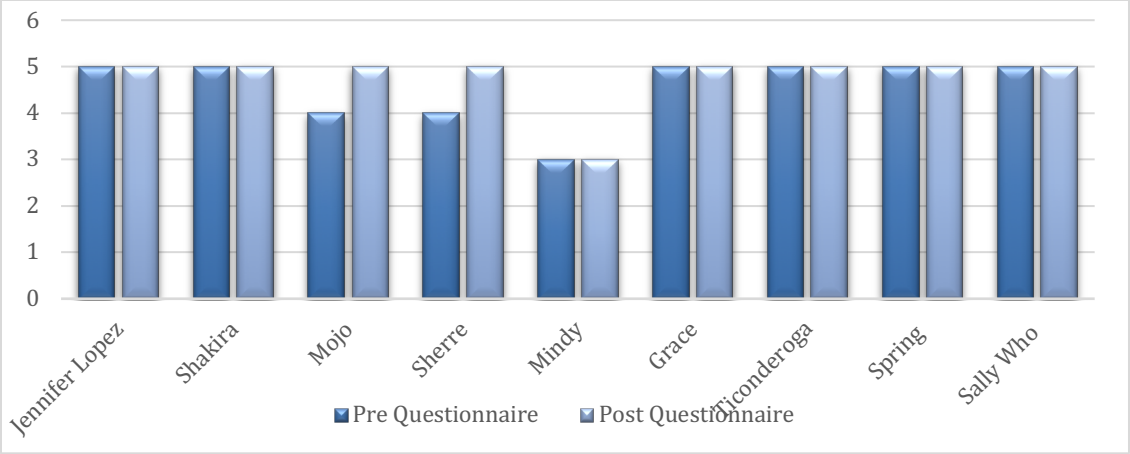

Figure 4.10. Importance of cultural competence before and after intervention.

Where do you feel you fall on the cultural proficiency continuum? Why? Seven of the nine participants responded in a way that could be accurately recorded. The point on the continuum with the most participants was actually in between two locations, cultural precompetence and cultural competence.

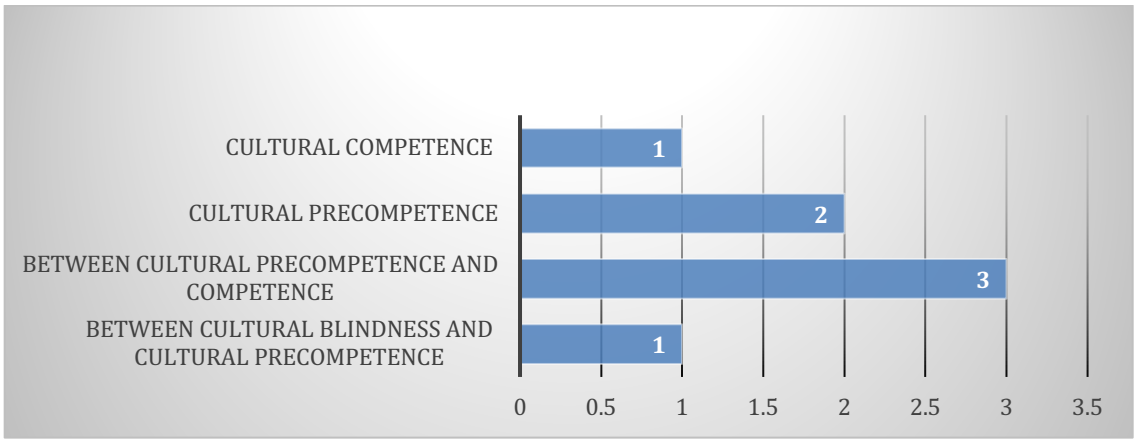

Figure 4.11. Cultural proficiency continuum—Participants.

Six participants offered explanations for their rating:

> *Spring*: I feel like I fall in the cultural competence category on the continuum. I say this confidently because I am able to see differences and understand them. I believe that I still have a long way to go and grow!
>
> *Shakira*: I still feel as though I am more aware than most … but I am also able to view things a little different know after our sessions.
>
> *Sherre*: I feel that I am at the cultural pre-competence level because I see the cultural differences and feel that there are areas where I can benefit from more education regarding those cultures. I recognize what I don't know and have the desire to improve my knowledge.
>
> *Mojo*: I hope I am on the cultural precompetence level because I would hate to see the differences in people and dismiss them, or make them wrong, or try to stomp them out. I have work to do and hope to continue to work on this my cultural proficiency. I would love to move up to the cultural competence or cultural proficiency level … even though I understand that these levels are very hard to achieve.
>
> *Ticonderoga*: Between cultural precompetence and competence, even with my own culture I can sometimes but the tokens of that culture and think that is enough.
>
> *Sally Who*: I feel like it [is] different for the different areas of bias. I think finding out your stuff is helpful and it helps you on journey to cultural proficiency … I am between cultural precompetence and cultural competence. I want to be cultural

proficiency. I hope that respond positively and affirmingly however I know I miss those teachable moments.

How do you plan to continue your growth in this area? The participants' responses to this question were condensed into three main concepts with five outliers. In order of occurrence, the volunteers plan to continue their growth in this area by conducting research, having discussions, and participating on DEI committees. A few responses from participants are included as follows:

Sally Who: I think continuing to attend DEI meetings, read books and articles, discuss and question.

Mojo: By listening better when people discuss differences and seek out ways to learn more about this subject.

Spring: Well, I plan to acknowledge differences and read more about cultural competency. I will have to be in positions where I am uncomfortable, in order for true growth to occur.

Jennifer Lopez: I continue to further my grown by asking questions, reading extensively, attending meetings on the subject, checking my own biases frequently. I now have a continuum to measure myself against when presented with these issues.

Do you feel like you will approach your teaching any differently now? Eight out of nine participants indicated that they would approach their teaching differently after participating in the targeted dialogue sessions while one participant indicated that they might approach their teaching differently.

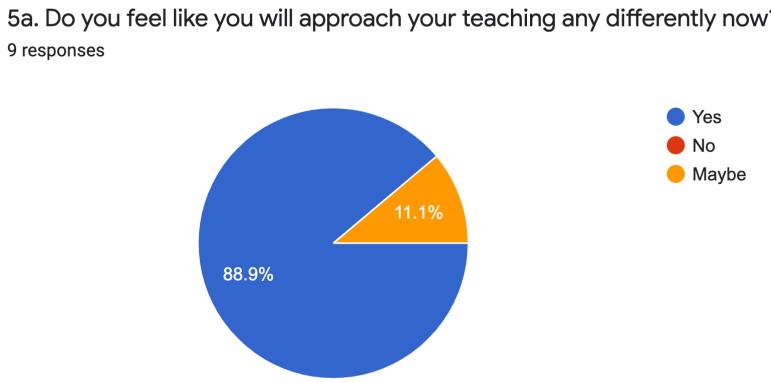

Figure 4.12. Changed teaching approach.

How do you feel like you will approach your teaching differently? An analysis of the participants' responses revealed four main areas that teachers said they would change in their teaching after participating in this action research study: inclusion, empathy, open dialogue, and bias awareness. Selected responses from participants follow:

> *Sherre*: I thought my classroom library was diverse, but I realize that I need to find other books so that ALL of my students are able to see themselves positively reflected in our room.
>
> *Spring*: I will be more mindful of my words, biases, and actions towards all of the children when teaching. I will have to plan better in order to make sure that true representation for all is visible. I can also make sure that my students have a voice, and know how to use it!
>
> *Jennifer Lopez*: I am way more aware of my own biases, the way I phrase things, my impact on my Ss and co-workers. A couple of times it has since stopped me in my tracks before speaking.

Sally Who: I am way more aware of my own biases, the way I phrase things, my impact on my Ss and co-workers. A couple of times it has since stopped me in my tracks before speaking.

Grace: Try to understand all perspectives before making assumptions.

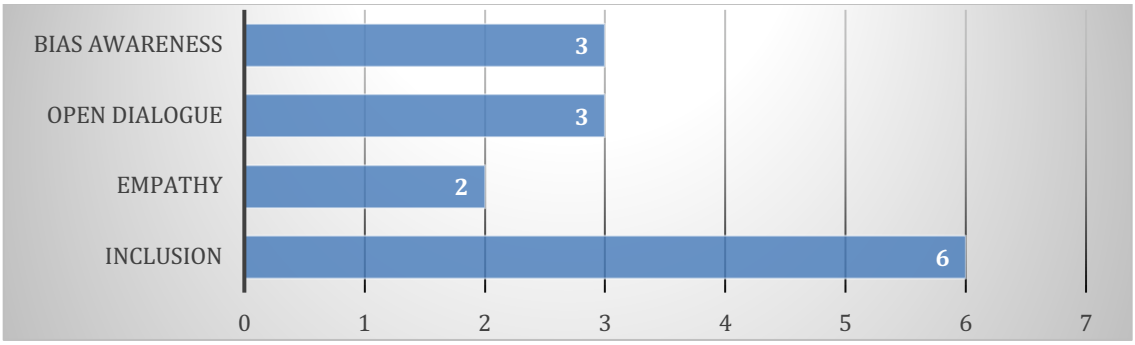

Figure 4.13. Different teaching approaches.

What do you think can be done to grow the cultural competence of our faculty? There were 18 original codes for this question which were reduced to four concepts with seven outliers. The concepts, in order of frequency, include small group sessions, accountability, exercises/activities, and process. A collection of recommendations from a few participants can be found in the following:

Mindy: Share short activities like those we experienced maybe at grade level/faculty meetings or workdays to keep the conversation going as we all work to achieve cultural proficiency.

Sherre: I think having small intimate sessions like the one you facilitated would be helpful. The small group with establish[ed] and respected norms made it feel less judgmental and "preachy."

Shakira: More discussions like the ones we've had … you don't know what you don't know … and these discussions will bring all that to light.

Spring: Well … I feel like we must first acknowledge that there is a true lack in the cultural competency within our faculty. Providing the faculty with many opportunities to learn, explore and understand cultural competency. Faculty meetings, DEI meetings, lunch and learns, reading and curriculum materials, however there has to be checks and balances. We can't just give the materials to teachers without checking to see that they are actually using them. It is an on-goin [*sic*] process. Lastly, when we know that faculty members have been culturally inappropriate (to the kids or other teachers) they must be made aware of it.

Where do you feel our building falls on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum? Why? When assessing our building and where we fall on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, there were four specific responses. The placement with the most occurrences was cultural blindness with two people. Other points on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum mentioned were precompetence, between incapacity and blindness, as well as between destructiveness and incapacity. An excerpt of explanations for the placement can be found in the following:

Sherre: The actions and comments around the building range from plain ignoring other cultures and our diversity to making comments that give the impression of "if it's not our way then it's wrong."

Shakira: We still have a very long way to go bc others juts [*sic*] don't know that it's really a problem. Again … they don't know what they don't know.

Sally Who: Cultural blindness is a very real at our school. I think people being color blind means your [*sic*] not racist. It means you see everyone the same. They don't understand what that truly means.

Table 4.3 *Repeat Participation*

Pseudonym	Reason(s) Volunteers Would Participate Again
Jennifer Lopez	I really desire to improve my knowledge and awareness in this area. I had some wonderful conversations with group members regarding the information which led to some real understanding for me.
Shakira	I learned other ways to be more culturally competent through these sessions and would still like to learn more.
Mojo	I feel I learned a lot.
Sherre	Not only did I learn more about myself, but I enjoyed and learned from the experiences of others. i felt that our group really did listen to understand and not just respond.
Mindy	I think the sessions are a good measurement of our own personal cultural competence and gives thought to how we may continue on the journey.
Grace	I still have a lot to understand and like most things, if we don't continue to communicate all progress can be lost.
Ticonderoga	None given
Spring	I enjoyed the discussions and seeing things through other people's lens. It also gave me an opportunity to learn and grow personally and professionally.
Sally Who	I would LOVE to continue the sessions. I wish it was a part of my schedule every week. I think it holds you accountable to yourself and those around you.

If you had the decision to participate in these sessions again would you? Why or why not? This was the only question with a unanimous answer in the entire action research study. All nine participants indicated that they would participate in these sessions again. The reasons why varied, but there was an overarching theme of continued

learning and growth. Table 4.3 displays the participants reasons for stating they would participate again.

Which was your favorite session? Why? The overwhelming favorite session was Session 3 on cultural competence and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum. The participants that chose Session 3 as their favorite enjoyed the activity, content, learned a great deal, and felt that people were caring and listened during that session. A few comments from volunteers follow:

> *Mindy*: Third. I liked the activity and felt the content of the session was very informative as to my own level of cultural competence.
>
> *Spring*: Session 3 was my favorite because I learned so much. Learning the various levels of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum and what they stand for was very eye-opening.
>
> *Mojo*: The second and third one. People were more caring and listened to each other better in these sessions.

Which was your least favorite session? Why? It is difficult to determine a clear session that was liked least by the participants. The same number of participants named sessions one and two as their least favorite. The participants that listed the first session as being their least favorite described it as feeling uncomfortable and not a safe space where the norms were respected. The reasons for choosing Session 2 included feeling like most people were quiet and not really knowing why they did not enjoy the session as much.

> *Mindy*: First. I didn't feel like it was a completely safe space.
>
> *Mojo*: The first one because I felt not listened to and uncomfortable.

Jennifer Lopez: The first one—I felt like that all the norms weren't being respected.

Spring: Session 2, I am unsure why.

Sally Who: I think it was the second session when most people where quite [*sic*]. It was me not the material or activities. I felt as if I had done something wrong in the first session. I was trying to figure out the group in some ways. I guess the silence made me uncomfortable.

What topics do you feel should be covered in future sessions? The participants offered six different topics that they felt should be covered in future sessions. The most frequent was the Cultural Proficiency Continuum which was mentioned by four people. Next, was bias, suggested twice. The remaining topics were recorded once: politics; religion; empathy; race, culture, gender, and such in the curriculum; and engaging in difficult or uncomfortable conversations

Is there any other information regarding the sessions, cultural competence, or the Cultural Proficiency Continuum that you would like to share? Of the 10 original codes recorded, two concepts were revealed. In order of frequency, the concepts included were worthwhile experience and no information. Samples of participant responses are included in the following:

Spring: It was a wonderful experience, so glad that I was able to be a part of the process. It would benefit all faculty members to Time would be the only issue, because we could always use more time in these discussions.

Sally Who: The sessions were amazing. I look forward to continuing to work on myself. I will continue looking for ways to move up on the progression.

Mindy: No, I thought all your sessions were thoughtfully prepared and considerate of the participant's time. The topics were informative and gave me somethings to think about as I continue to learn about the importance cultural competence.

Researcher Session Notes

Saldaña (2016) explained, "the researcher's participant observation field notes, authored from a first-person perspective, merit codes since they both document naturalistic action and include important interpretations of social life and potentially rich analytic insights" (p. 17). My notes were the easiest to code. I felt more comfortable condensing my own words than the words of someone else. I quickly reduced my notes and codes from each session into two or three concepts.

Researcher Reflective Journal Entries

To reduce the data from my journal entries, I took the most prominent topics and divided them into three categories for each session: feelings, improvements to make, and revelations. Data was recorded in the reflexive journal before and after reading feedback from the participants' digital journal entries.

Table 4.4 *Researcher Concepts*

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Culture Perspectives Relationships	Bias Diversity Perspective	Identity Stereotypes

Feelings

The feelings mentioned in the entry for Session 1 included: amazing, excited, happy, and terrible. The range of emotion is due to how I felt before and after reading the digital journal entries. I felt positive immediately following the session and was excited about Session 2. After reading the journal entries, I realized that some of the participants did not feel like the session was a safe space. Additionally, one participant mentioned that I needed to watch my facial expressions because I made a face when someone mentioned a political figure. After reading the feedback, I felt terrible. Only one feeling was mentioned in my journal for Session 2, sad. For the final session, I wrote about feeling excited, hopeful, and positive.

Revelations

The journal entry following the first session included several revelations. I planned too much and did not have enough time to cover everything. Second, it was really challenging to facilitate the session and take notes simultaneously. Next, I have work to do to become a strong DEI facilitator. I also realized how different my perspective of the session was from some of the participants. Last, I left the experience knowing my colleagues better. My journal entry following the second session contained the challenges of facilitating and taking notes again. I also described how hard it was not to share with the group. I decided that I enjoy DEI sessions where the facilitator modeled transparency by sharing so I would continue to do so. I noticed that someone who was very vocal the first time said almost nothing the second session. Following the third meeting, my session revelations included the positive impact activities had on starting

dialogue, the even greater respect I now had for good facilitators, and once again, how hard it was to facilitate and take notes.

Improvements to Make

The first session had the most extensive list of improvements to make: add additional group agreements; be affirming, not negative; change location; contribute less to the dialogue; leave more time for discussion; have snacks; be more prepared; and start and end on time. I was made sure I addressed each of the first set of improvements during the second session, so the list was shorter for the third session: be even more prepared, practice aloud more, play happy music at the beginning of the session, and set alarms on phone to help manage time. After everything I learned from the first two gatherings, the third had the shortest list of improvements to make for future sessions: practice more and continue to play music.

Themes

Concept code frequency from the participant data determined the main themes of this study. Two concepts coded in all three sessions were revelations and safe space. The theme associated with revelations is DEI Discussions Lead to New Learning. Due to the varied nature of this new learning, I chose the term revelations to be all-encompassing. The theme associated with safe space is Safe Spaces are Critical for DEI Discussions. It is not coincidental that the session most enjoyable for participants was also the session that they felt most comfortable. However, since much of the dialogue during these sessions was uncomfortable by nature, this comfortability may also be due to relationships strengthened during the study. These relationships connect to an additional theme found in two of the three sessions, perspectives. The theme associated with

perspectives is DEI Discussions Help Strengthen Relationships by Listening to the Perspectives of Others.

Analysis of Data

The next section reviews the research question and additional subquestions. The participant journal entries and questionnaire responses were used to address each inquiry.

How do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competence?

Several pieces of data were considered to analyze this question: pre- and post-questionnaire definitions of cultural competence, the rating of the importance of cultural competence before and after the targeted dialogue sessions, the number of teachers that indicated that they would change their teaching following the sessions, and the ways they would do so.

I took the participants' definition from the pre-questionnaire and compared it to their response on the post-questionnaire (see Table 4.5). The post-questionnaire definitions of cultural competence were more robust. The participants used key concepts and actions discussed during the targeted dialogue sessions in their definitions the second time that they did not use the first time. Some examples of these key concepts and actions include: continuum, perspectives, see/acknowledge, understand, and accept.

Eighty-nine percent of the participants indicated that they would approach their teaching differently after participating in the action research study. The themes most referenced, in order of frequency, by participants when discussing how their teaching would change include inclusion, open dialogue and bias awareness, and empathy.

Table 4.5 *Cultural Competence Defined Before and After Intervention*

Pseudonym	Pre-Questionnaire: How do you define cultural competence?	Post-Questionnaire: How do you define cultural competence?
Jennifer Lopez	I define it as having knowledge and skills that allow an individual to communicate and work effectively and empathetically in a cross-cultural environment.	I would still define it the same way—but I now realize that is on a continuum—It is more than being aware of cultural differences, it is putting into practice what you know, educating others confidently.
Shakira	Having an understanding of those different from you, whether it be race, religion, sexual preference, etc.	Understanding that It differs from individual to individual... not all are wrong - but are just perspectives of each person and how they are raised and who they are raised by.
Mojo	Trying to understand and be kind to all people.	Cultural competence is the ability to see and accept people for who they are.
Sherre	Being able to understand and relate to people whose culture and traditions are different than my own.	A willingness to acknowledge, understand, respect the customs, traditions, and beliefs of others by looking through a lens different than your own.
Mindy	Good	I am more aware that there are many factors other than family traditions and beliefs that can be part of someone's cultural identity.
Grace	An understanding of how others have been raised and what they have experienced throughout their lives both positive and negative relative to their ethnicity.	Being aware of others cultures and embracing them.
Ticonderoga	Have an understanding and appreciation of other cultures outside our own. Being able to speak about cultures to a certain extent	A process of building awareness and acceptance of different cultures, done with care, respect, and sensitivity
Spring	Understanding your own cultural identity, and the cultural identity of others.	Cultural competency is the ability to see and accept the differences of others without judgment.
Sally Who	Cultural competence is the ability to appreciate, interact and understanding how	There is no definition of cultural competence. Trying to reword all the different definitions we looked at and make

	cultural affects one's view when communicating with others whose ethnicity, beliefs and cultural are different then your own.	one your own is difficult. It is a skill which encompasses so many different things. You must be able to understand your own view or perspective, being able to acknowledge difference see its importance and have positive and affirming attitudes towards difference. It using all of this to understand, communicate affectively and interact with all cultures (races, genders, ethic [*sic*] groups and religions). That is a good start but it seems like words are not enough. Cultural competence is so much more.

Six out of the nine participants (67%) already rated the importance of cultural competency at a 5, extremely important, before the targeted dialogue sessions. After the intervention, two participants increased their ratings while the other seven remained the same, six at a 5 rating and one at a 3 rating. This means that at the end of the study, 89% of the sample (eight out of nine participants) rated the importance of cultural competence as extremely important.

How important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment?

When considering the ratings of the participants from the pre-questionnaire, 67% (six out of nine participants) rated the importance of cultural competency at a 5, extremely important, before the targeted dialogue sessions. At the end of the action research study, 89%, or eight out of nine participants, rated the importance of cultural competency at a 5. When these two percentages are averaged, the mean is 78%. Based on this data, cultural competence is important to teachers in this environment.

Which targeted dialogue session is most impactful for participants and why?

The participants indicated that the third session on Cultural Competence and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum was their favorite. Their reasoning included interesting content, an enjoyable activity, and being able to learn in a safe space.

What steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area?

Since all the volunteers stated that they would participate again if given the chance, one could assume that the sessions were informative and helpful. To help educators become more knowledgeable in this area, there are two options. One option is to offer the same three sessions again, taking the action research participants feedback into account to make improvements to each. A second option would be to offer one session, the participants favorite on cultural competence and the cultural proficiency continuum. If the participants would like to participate or are interested in helping, I would welcome the opportunity to have additional facilitators.

Summary

This exploration was conducted to explore how three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impacted early elementary, independent school teachers' opinions on cultural competence. I collected data before, during, and after the sessions in the forms of a prequestionnaire, three journal entries, and a post questionnaire, as well as my own reflexive journal entries and session notes.

This action research study facilitated a deeper understanding of cultural competence for the participants. This new learning caused most of them to say they would approach their teaching differently in the future. Inclusion, bias awareness, open dialogue, and empathy were areas participants described as wanting to approach

differently. Additionally, after the dialogue sessions there was an increase in participant rating of the importance of cultural competence. The volunteers unanimously stated that they would participate in the sessions again. Three main themes emerged from the data:

- DEI Discussions Lead to New Learning
- Safe Spaces are Critical for DEI Discussions
- DEI Discussions Help Strengthen Relationships by Listening to the Perspectives of Others

Three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impacted the participants understanding of cultural competence, its importance, and how they will approach their teaching going forward.

Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations

> Creative curriculum leaders who foster community recognize that moral and social responsibilities are deeply rooted in the concept of creative leadership. There is a sincere or authentic desire to make a difference in the lives of others. (Brubaker, 2004, p. 131)

Introduction and Overview of the Study

I designed this action research study to explore how three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics would impact teacher opinions on cultural competence. The study also examined how teachers define cultural competence, rate its importance, what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area, and which of the dialogue sessions was most impactful for participants and why. The study took place in an early elementary, independent school located in the southeast region with a diverse student population. Data were collected digitally from the participants before, during, and after the sessions as well as anecdotally.

After Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from the University of South Carolina in December of 2019, I arranged meetings with the president, senior vice president of academic and student affairs, and building principal to describe the exploration in detail, receive feedback, and obtain permission to conduct the study.

However, in January when reviewing the timeline again, I worried about not having enough time to write the remaining chapters and satisfactorily edit. After talking to my dissertation chair, we determined that it would be okay to move my timeline up. In hindsight, the decision to move the timeline up was wise. Few could have guessed there would be a global pandemic two short months later. A fairly diverse group of seven teachers and two teacher assistants volunteered to participate in the action research study. All participants taught early elementary students in the independent school environment. Each participant attended three targeted dialogue sessions, completed a cultural competence self-assessment, pre-questionnaire, a journal entry following each session (three in total), and a post-questionnaire.

Recap of Problem of Practice

This action research study was an exploration on the lack of consistent dialogue on cultural competence in an early elementary, independent school environment. Places of learning should be safe havens for all stakeholders. An atmosphere that values cultural competence honors all. Lindsey et al. (2019) clarified,

> For students to learn what their teachers have to offer, they must feel fully appreciated as individuals within the context of their own distinctive ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and with their own particular genders, sexual orientations, and sensory and physical abilities. Educators need to address the issues that arise in the midst of diversity and respond sensitively to the needs of students in ways that facilitate learning. (p. 15)

Providing educators with opportunities to engage in dialogue on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics will help them better empathize and communicate with each other, their

students, parents, and other stakeholders. Further, once the opportunities for growth are organized, teachers must understand the importance of their engagement and continuous reflection. Schools that do not value cultural competence are missing a unique opportunity to help a generation of students better engage with each other and positively impact the world.

Research Questions

This action research study sought to answer the following question: How do three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competence? Additional research subquestions include determining:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which targeted dialogue session is most impactful for participants and why
- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

Purpose of the Study

Educators face an incredibly daunting task, they must prepare students for a world that does not yet exist. Judging by current demographic trends, one thing we can say with certainty about this world of the future is that it will be diverse. Navigating this diverse society will require cultural competence. As reviewed with participants in this action research study, cultural competence can be viewed as a journey along a continuum.

When referencing the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, Lindsey et al. (2019) expounded, "This tool provides language for describing both unhealthy and healthy policies, practices, values, and behaviors. Six points along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum indicate distinct ways of seeing and responding to difference" (p. 129). If teachers are preparing students to succeed, understanding this continuum is essential to positively contributing to a global society. To impart this knowledge to students, teachers must also possess it. This action research study sought to understand early elementary, independent school teachers' views on cultural competence while participating in three targeting dialogue sessions. Success of the strategy was determined by a more robust definition of cultural competence, an increase in the overall rating of the importance of cultural competence, various self-identified adjustments for teaching, and their unanimous willingness to participate in the sessions again if given the opportunity.

Recap of Methodology

Understanding is the essence of phenomenology. Due to the use of multiple lenses through which to view the problem of practice, this particular phenomenological study is considered critical social-reconstructionist hermeneutic. What differentiates hermeneutic phenomenology from Husserlian or transcendental is the belief that it is not possible to truly suspend all judgment while trying to understand phenomenon. Our foresight, also referred to as foreconception, is "preconceived knowledge about a phenomenon" (Peoples, 2021, p. 34). Hermeneutic phenomenology is based on the belief that one cannot be separated from their foresight. Referring to the views of Martin Heidegger, the philosopher credited with hermeneutic phenomenology, Peoples (2021) explained, "He believed that interpretation is a constant revision. As I am interpreting something, I have

a pre-understanding of the phenomenon, and as I get new information, there is a revision of that understanding" (p. 33). This continuous cycle of understanding is known as the hermeneutic circle. The similarities between the hermeneutic circle and the action research cycle are irrefutable.

Findings

The action research study revealed that three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competency. There was a difference in the depth of the participant definitions before and after the three sessions. Further, this study confirmed the general prominence of cultural competence by faculty members in this setting. Before the sessions, 67% of the sample rated the importance of cultural competence at a 5. After the three sessions, 89% of the sample rated the importance of cultural competence as a 5. The participants found the third session, which focused on cultural competence and the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, to be the most impactful. To help our colleagues grow in these areas, the participants recommended: more small sessions with respected norms, activities during grade-level meetings or on workdays to keep the conversations going, affinity groups, reading and curriculum materials, an ongoing process with checks and balances, DEI meetings, lunch and learns as well as letting faculty members know when they have been culturally inappropriate.

Description of the Action Researcher as Curriculum Leader

In the letter of intent, I wrote in hopes of being accepted to the University of South Carolina's Ed. D program in curriculum and instruction, I discussed my

involvement in the curriculum alignment process and my desire to more adeptly weave cultural competence throughout. Curriculum courses were included in my previous graduate studies and the 2015 People of Color Conference was life changing, but I felt I needed even more expertise to be able to guide my school through the curriculum alignment process. I have learned that this endeavor, much like action research, is a cyclical process. There is no step-by-step guide that will work in all environments, but I am confident that I can guide my school in the right direction while making changes and improvements along the way to help us grow. Action research, hermeneutic phenomenology and the journey to cultural competence are all processes. While action research occurs cyclically and hermeneutic phenomenology is a spiral, the journey to cultural competence is more linear. I see these processes working together, like cycles moving forward on a plane (see Figure 5.1). Action research cycles of critical social reconstructionist-hermeneutic phenomenology can help us move forward on our journey to cultural competence.

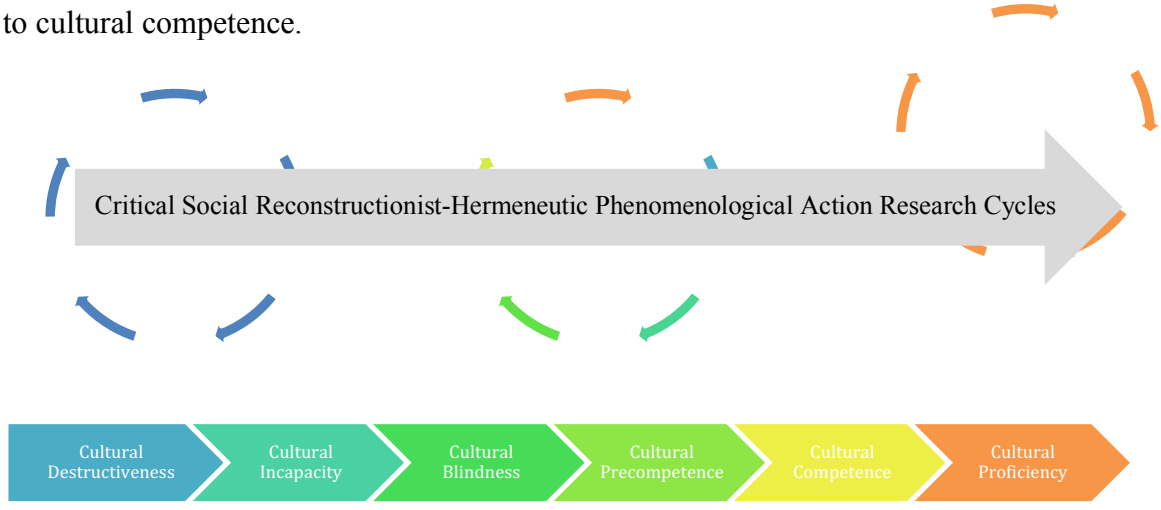

Figure 5.1. Critical social reconstructionist Hermeneutic Phenomenological Action Research Cycles.

Action Plan

Cultural competence is a process. If we expect teachers to embark on this journey, we must provide opportunities for professional development and discourse. We are in unprecedented times. There is a global pandemic that is changing our world. When we left school in mid-March, I truly thought we would be back to finish out the 2019–2020 school year. Covid-19 has had extraordinary impacts on society as a whole and completely transformed the educational sector. Initially, I struggled to develop a revised action plan that reflected our new, global pandemic realities as opposed to what I used to refer as "normal" circumstances.

My action plan has three phases. Phase 1 involves identifying and collectively developing a list of tenets, similar to the group agreements developed during this action research study, that we will use to guide all we do. Phase 2 describes various opportunities for professional development and collegial discourse on DEI topics. Phase 3 is a description of accountability measures.

Phase 1

In order for the faculty to align, general consensus regarding our guiding principles is necessary. In some schools, these are created by the administrators without input from the faculty; however, I believe the process to be an important way to ensure all voices are heard and acquire buy-in from constituents. It is also important that the guiding principles align with the mission statement of our institution. My school already started this process by trying to identify school norms. This procedure was similar to my coding processes. We started with a brainstorming session on what our expectations should be for each other. Next, the long list of expectations was grouped into themes.

These themes should reveal a list of beliefs from which we can operate. Unfortunately, this process was interrupted by the global pandemic but will continue in the fall. Once these guiding principles are finalized, they will be used to help guide all decisions.

Phase 2, Part 1

There are already multiple opportunities to engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions on our campus. There is a group in our building that meets biweekly as well as a larger body that meets once a month. Additionally, usually twice a year, there are opportunities for a few faculty members to attend full day workshops conducted by Teaching Tolerance on Social Justice Teaching 101 or Facilitating Critical Conversations. It seems that there is a core group of people that always want to attend these offerings. To ensure faculty members understand the importance of cultural competence to our community, I want to make DEI work a priority. Generally speaking, I am not a proponent of "requiring" learning. Educators should be proponents of lifelong learning and understand its importance. However, to ensure appropriate emphasis, DEI work will be an expectation for faculty members.

I recommend each faculty member attend at least one DEI meeting during the second, third, and fourth quarters. Further, I recommend that we set aside two full professional development days, one dedicated to DEI work and the other filled with various options of pedagogical priorities. On DEI workday, I would like to offer both Teaching Tolerance full day workshops and personalized webinar options for those that have already taken both full day workshops and do not wish to attend again. Eventually, I would like for the entire faculty to attend both full day workshops. Luckily, although I have attended workshops like this in the past, there is always new knowledge to be

gleaned from these sessions, especially with a new group of participants. Resources at any educational institution are not infinite. Auspiciously, the Teaching Tolerance full day workshops are quite affordable with a price of $30 per participant.

If for some reason a teacher is unable to attend one of the required DEI sessions (morning or afternoon duties, coaching responsibilities, etc.) within a quarter, they can attend one of the numerous Teaching Tolerance on demand webinars and submit a reflection. The reflection would include questions regarding the topic of study and if the teacher would plan to incorporate any of the information into the classroom.

Judging by the work we have done thus far on Phase 1, I am certain Phase 2 will align with our guiding principles as well as the school mission statement.

Phase 2, Part 2

The second part of Phase 2 involves integrating social justice standards that align with our guiding principles and mission statement into our curriculum. Since I want teachers to be actively involved in this process, it is important that Phase 1 and Phase 2, part 1 occur first. It is unreasonable to expect teachers to incorporate standards into their curriculum with which they do not agree or of which they have no working knowledge. Social justice can be defined as "the belief that schools in a democracy can and should prepare citizens to work actively and collectively on problems facing society" (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 259). An excellent resource for social justice teaching is Teaching Tolerance. Teaching Tolerance is a development of the Southern Poverty Law Center, founded in 1991 to stop the advancement of hate (A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 1991–2019). Teaching Tolerance offers a free program with various resources for teachers that "emphasize social justice and anti-bias" (A Project of the Southern

Poverty Law Center, 1991–2019). The mission of this organization is "to help teachers and schools educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy" (A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 1991–2019). Teaching Tolerance has created social justice standards to "show how anti-bias education works through the four domains of identity, diversity, justice, and action" (A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 1991–2019).

Phase 3

Teacher evaluations occur in three-year cycles. To encourage lifelong learning and growth mindset, I first recommend changing the name from teacher evaluation to teacher growth tool or something similar. Secondly, as further demonstration of the importance of DEI work to our community, I recommend adding a section on furthering DEI knowledge to the growth tool.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the small sample size and the nature of action research, the results of the current study are not generalizable. However, the results can be used to improve and develop a new plan for future targeted dialogue sessions for the next cycle of action research. To increase the generalizability of the study, it could be conducted on a larger scale. If various early elementary, independent schools from different parts of the country were to participate, the findings were certainly be more generalizable. Comparably, if a similar study were conducted with the entire faculty of an early elementary, independent school a great deal could be learned as well. An additional limitation to address is the timeline of the study. These three targeted dialogue sessions

took place in three consecutive weeks. If the study were conducted over a longer period of time in either of the previously described scenarios, the results would most likely be different. Another important consideration for future studies is the role of the facilitator. In this action research study, I served as facilitator. Due to my position as a building administrator, it is possible that my position impacted the study. It is certainly worth exploring having an outside facilitator in similar studies.

Summary

The problem of practice that precipitated this action research study was the lack of consistent dialogue amongst faculty members on cultural competence in an early elementary, independent school setting. This inquiry led to an exploration of how three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impacted teacher opinions on cultural competence while also investigating:

- how teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- how important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- which dialogue session is most impactful for participants and why
- what steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

The dialogue sessions proved to be a beneficial tool to encourage meaningful and useful collegial discourse amongst teachers in this environment. The lived experiences of the volunteers derived from journal entries as well as pre- and post-questionnaires highlighted a deeper understanding of cultural competence, increased valuing of its prominence, and many recommendations for how to help colleagues grow in this area.

An additional deduction includes the importance of a safe space with respected norms when engaging in this type of dialogue. In closing, I want the educators in our school to move beyond cultural competence on the continuum; I want culturally proficient educators. Lindsey, et al., (2019) explained,

> Culturally proficient educators demonstrate an understanding of the cacophony of diverse cultures each person may experience in the school setting. Although they accept that they will not necessarily have intimate knowledge about each of the cultural represented in a classroom, school, or district, they recognize their need to continuously learn more. They develop a conscious awareness of the cultures of their districts or schools, and they understand that each has a powerful influence on the educators, students, parents, and communities associated with that district or school. By incrementally increasing their awareness and understanding, they begin to find the harmony within the diversity. (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 14)

Cultural proficiency may be a lofty goal to set for the entire faculty to attain, but it is certainly worthwhile. Once there is a common goal grounded in clear understanding of values coupled with a system of support in place, the possibilities are truly endless.

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Appendix A

Weekly Bulletin Advertisement

Erica Wiltshire will be conducting an action research study on how targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact early elementary, independent school teachers' opinions on cultural competence. She is seeking five to eight volunteers to participate in the study. Stipends will be awarded to volunteers that successfully fulfill all requirements. There will be an informational meeting on January 23 at 7:30 a.m. in the Collaboratory to review the study in more detail. All interested parties should attend. If you cannot attend the meeting, but are interested in hearing more about the study, please contact Erica at uscresearcher1920@gmail.com

Appendix B

Information Meeting Infographic

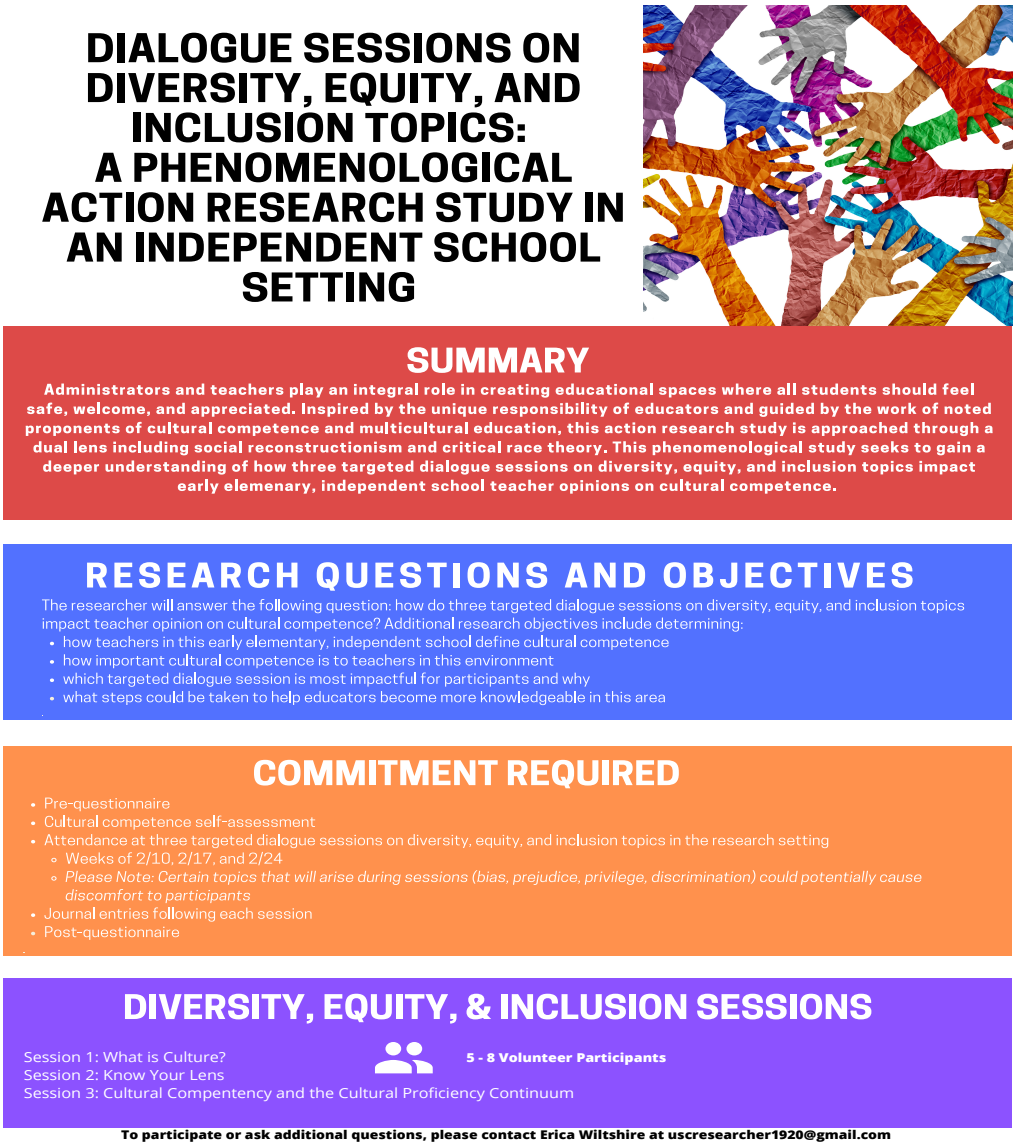

Figure B.1. Information meeting infographic.

Appendix C

Invitation Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Erica Wiltshire and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Curriculum Studies, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying how three targeted dialogue sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics impact teacher opinions on cultural competence. Additional research objectives include determining:

- How teachers in this early elementary, independent school define cultural competence
- How important cultural competence is to teachers in this environment
- Which cultural competence session is most impactful for participants and why
- What steps could be taken to help educators become more knowledgeable in this area

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to:

- complete a pre-questionnaire (confidentially via Google Forms ©)
- complete a cultural competence self-assessment (confidentially via Google Forms ©)
- meet for three 75-minute targeted dialogue sessions on multicultural competencies
- complete a journal entry following each session (confidentially via Google Forms ©)
- complete a post-questionnaire (confidentially via Google Forms ©)

We will discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion topics such as culture, bias, privilege, discrimination, racism, etc. Due to the subject matter, you may experience discomfort

during some conversations. Additionally, you may also feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to participate in any discussions or answer any questions that you do not want to. There will be three targeted dialogue sessions that will take place the weeks of 2/10, 2/117, and 2/24. Each session should last about 75 minutes.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Participants that successfully fulfill all study requirements will receive a $50 gift card.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (404) 516-0122 or uscresearcher1920@gmail.com. You may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Aisha Haynes, at haynesa@mailbox.sc.edu. Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please notify me via email by next Wednesday, January 29, 2020.

With kind regards,

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Appendix D

Pre-Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
    - 18-25
    - 26-34
    - 35-44
    - 45-54
    - Over 55
2. What pronouns do you use?
    - She, her, hers
    - He, him, his
    - They, them, theirs
3. How do you describe your ethnicity?
4. What is your highest level of education?
    - High school
    - Some College
    - Associate's Degree
    - Bachelor's Degree
    - Master's Degree
    - Specialist Degree

- Doctoral Degree

5. How many years have you worked in education (public and/or private)?
    - 0-5
    - 6-10
    - 11-15
    - 16-20
    - 21+
6. How many of those years have you worked in an independent school?
    - 0-5
    - 6-10
    - 11-15
    - 16-20
    - 21+
7. Did your teacher preparation program include any multicultural education or cultural competence courses?
8. How do you define Cultural Competence?
9. How important is it to you as an educator? (1-5)
10. What do you do to further your knowledge in this area (cultural competence)?
11. What factors contributed to your participation in this study?

Appendix E

The Cultural Competence Self-Assessment

This assessment is taken directly from Moule (2012, pp. 24–25)

Use the following key to assess your level of competence for each of the statements:

U – Unfamiliar – The information is totally new to me

AW – Awareness – I have heard about it, but I do not know its full scope, such as its principal components, applications, and modifications

K – Knowledge – I know enough about this to write or talk about it I know what it is, but I am not ready to use it. I need practice and feedback.

AP – Application – I am ready to apply or have applied this information in my own work and/or life

F – Facilitation – I am ready to work with other people to help them learn this. I feel confident enough to demonstrate and/or teach this to others, yet, I know that my learning is a lifelong process.

Where I Am Now	Where I Want to Be	Competencies
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I am aware of the problem of language, images, and situations that suggest that most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same (e.g., "All Asians are good at math").
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I substitute factual and meaningful information for ethnic clichés. For example, I avoid using terms and adjectives that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes.
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I try to address stereotypical statements when I hear them used by others. I avoid patronizing and tokenism of any racial or ethnic group (e.g. "One of my best friends is Black").
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I understand the histories of oppressed groups (Native American, African American, Latino/Chicano, Asian/Pacific American) in the United States.
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I thoughtfully view books and films to see if all groups are fairly represented.
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I am aware of how my membership in different groups influences the power that I possess, and I am aware of how to constructively use that power.
U AW K AP F	U AW K AP F	I understand racial identity development. I know how to evaluate personal attitudes, emotions, and actions around my own racism and prejudices. For White individuals: I am conscious of my White racial identity and its relationship to racial oppression I the United States. I think critically about what it means to be White in this country. For Individuals of Color: I am conscious of my racial identity development and its relationship to racial oppression in the United States. I think critically about what it means to be of Color in this country.

Appendix F

Guided Journal Entry Questions

1. What new learning emerged from today's session?
2. How did you feel during the session? Comfortable? Uncomfortable? Why?
3. What will you take from this session?
4. What could be done to improve this session?

Appendix G

Post Questionnaire

1. How do you define cultural competence now?
2. How important is it to you as an educator now? (1-5)
3. Where do you feel you fall on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum? Why?
4. How do you plan to continue your growth in this area?
5. Do you feel like you will approach your teaching any differently now?
6. How do you feel like you will approach your teaching differently?
7. What do you think can be done to grow the cultural competence of our faculty?
8. Where do you feel our building falls on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum? Why?
9. If you had the decision to participate in these sessions again, would you? Why or why not?
10. Which was your favorite session? Why?
11. Which was your least favorite session? Why?
12. What topics do you feel should be covered in future sessions?
13. Is there any other information regarding the sessions, cultural competence, or the Cultural Proficiency Continuum that you would like to share?

Appendix H

Session 1: What Is Culture?

Table H.1 *Session 1: What Is Culture?*

Time	**Session 1: What Is Culture?** ***February 11, 2020***
Prep	• Set-up • Come to the space early to set up • Presentation
5 minutes	1. Check In – In addition to telling us how you are arriving to today's session, please also tell us what your favorite snack food is.
8 minutes	1. Create Group Agreements • While in this space we will discuss potentially difficult and uncomfortable topics. As such, it is important to create some agreements. • We will begin by establishing norms that will direct how we conduct ourselves in this space. • Allow participants to offer suggestions and record them on Google Doc • Once there are no more volunteers, ask if anyone would like to add anything else to this list.
2 Minutes	1. Researcher's Role a. I am not here because I have all the answers. I am here to present some information and facilitate discussion. The goal of each of our sessions is to have dialogue on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. I actually hope to talk the least during these sessions. I am going to take notes during the discussions. You are welcome to see my notes at any time. I will not be recording names, only comments. When I'm not using the SmartBoard, I am happy to post my Google Doc for all to see. b. Remember that it is possible that you may experience some discomfort due to the topics that may come up.. You, of course, can always leave if this becomes too much, but I hope you will consider leaning into the discomfort. Most growth doesn't happen when we are comfortable.
10 minutes	Activity – Meeting on the Congo (adapted from Merry Merryfield in *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models* pp. 76–80 1. Split room into two groups.

	2. Give approximately half of the group "That Was No Brother" handout and the other half "That Was No Welcome" (from Merry Merryfield in *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models* pp. 76–80). 3. Give them about 4-5 minutes to read. 4. Have groups discuss what they just read. 5. Ask the following questions (being sure to let someone from each handout respond): • What happened on the Congo River? • Where did things go awry? • Why do we have two different accounts of the same event? 6. Give each participant the other handout and give them time to read it. 7. What happened here?
10 minutes	Culture – Defined • Today's topic is on one of those words that is used often, but is challenging to define. Culture. • Have each person submit their own definition of culture to Poll Everywhere. • Review all definitions aloud and leave them posted for all to see. 1. "everything you believe and everything you do that enables you to identify with people who are like you and that distinguishes you from people who differ from you." (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 29) 2. "a lens through which life is perceived." (Moule, 2012, pg. 11) 3. Two Types of Culture - According to Zaretta Hammond - author of Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain • Surface Culture - observable elements of culture (food, dress, music, holidays) (Hammond, 2015, p. 22) • Shallow Culture - "unspoken rules around everyday social interactions and norms" (Hammond, 2015, p. 22) - i.e. courtesy, attitudes towards elders, concepts of time, personal space, nonverbal communication ***4. Culture is personal and ever changing - ~1 min*** • ***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntfmLnTEsA8*** ***5. Recognizing Individual Characteristics - ~1 min*** • ***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPYLe-r55o8*** 6. U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs - ~ 1 min • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57KW6RO8Rcs 7. Let's choose or develop our own definition so each time the word is discussed, we are in agreement of its meaning. 8. Beware Cultural Assumptions and Stereotypes

15 Minutes	1. Discussion Questions: • How does “Meeting on the Congo” connect to culture? • Is one account right? • How are these readings similar to history or current events? • What role does culture play in our classrooms? 1. Cultural Variations - Communication 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZJ0y2Rc1HY • How can we help our students understand this? What can we do? • How might we define culture for our students? • What is dominant culture? 1. Dominant Culture - In such a situation of diversity, a dominant culture is one whose values, language, and ways of behaving are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behaviour, or by monopolizing the media of communication. 1. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095725838 • What would you say is the dominant culture in this country? In our school? 1. What makes you say that? 2. What other messages are sent by this? • When immersed in the dominant culture, how might other cultures feel? 1. It should be noted that the views of people who are oppressed or the minority often are underrepresented in mainstream texts. • How can we keep this from happening in our classrooms? 1. By examining more than one perspective we are more likely to have a better understanding of the event or issue. 2. Think about the books you read 3. Think about the posters and anchor charts you post 4. Are your students seeing themselves AND others in your classroom? ***5. Emily Style - Curriculum as Window and Mirror*** • Anyone else want to weigh in on this? Thoughts to add? Any stories?
15	Wrap Up

minutes	1. Take Aways • It is always my hope that each time we leave this space, we take something with us that we did not come in with. • Are you leaving this space with anything you did not have when you arrived? It's okay if you are not, but if you are, what? 2. Remind participants of next session 3. Provide Journaling Time
2 minutes	Adjourn

Appendix I

Session 2: Know Your Lens

Table I.1 *Session 2: Know Your Lens*

Time	**Session 2: Know Your Lens** ***February 18, 2020***
Prep	• Set-up • Come to the space early to set up: o Snacks ▪ Queso - Willy's ▪ Guac - Willy's ▪ Chips - Willy's ▪ Twizzlers o Presentation o Activity ▪ Beads ▪ 10 cups for participants ▪ pipe cleaners/bracelets o Post Group Agreements
5 minutes	1. Check In – How are you arriving to today's session?
2 Minutes	1. Feedback a. Thank you for your thoughtful and honest feedback b. It will only help me make the sessions better and plan appropriately for future sessions. c. Based on the feedback, I'd like to revisit our group agreements
3 minutes	1. Review Group Agreements • Add: 1. Value the speaker - Let's try to only speak one at a time and not have side conversations. 2. I learned a great deal with our first session. Time management is hard to do while facilitating. I need someone to help me. Can someone volunteer to be the time keeper for us? Time will be honored today. 3. Keep in mind that we are all in different places on our

	journey of cultural competence. We are all growing and learning. Let's all, me included, assume the best of intentions and speak to each other in love. 4. Stamina?
7 minutes	Activity 1 – Diversity In Your Life (adapted from Lindsey et al. in *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Edition,* pp. 190-191 1. Last session we discussed the meaning and importance of culture. 2. One of the ways culture was defined was as "a lens" 3. It is important to "know your lens." 4. One thing that influences our lens is our environment. 5. We are going to use beads to develop a quick "snapshot" of the diversity in our environments. 6. Explain that for each statement the participants will place the appropriate bead in their cup from the following: • White – European American • Black – African American or Black • Yellow – Asian or Pacific islander • Brown – Latino/Latina • Dark Blue – Biracial or Multiracial • Orange – Native American • Purple – LGBTQ • Green – Physically Disabled • Light Pink - Mentally Disabled • Teal - Not Sure 7. Statements: • I am… • My colleagues are mostly… • My children's teachers are mostly OR my teachers were mostly… • My closest friend is… • My dentist is… • My doctor is… • My spouse, partner, or most recent spouse/partner is… • My neighbors are mostly… • People who visit my home are mostly… • My favorite actor is… • My favorite musicians are… • Artwork represented in my home is… • I see mostly … on TV • Authors that I read are mostly… • People that I see or read about in my newspaper/see on the news are mostly…
7 minutes	Group Discussion Questions 1. How do you feel about what you see on your bracelet? Surprised? Not

	surprised? 2. Do you want your bracelet to look different? 3. How could you get your cup to look different?
15 minutes	Bias 1. Your environment is only one thing that influences your lens; there are many others. 2. Another major influence on your lens is bias. 3. We are going to do a brief, personal exploration of biases. 4. How do you define bias? • Use Poll Everywhere to record responses • "Now I'm going to ask for your opinion. You'll use your phone, tablet, or laptop to respond. Please pull out your phone or tablet so you can participate, but remember to keep them on silent. You'll participate by sending a text message or visiting the URL from any web browser. You don't need to download anything." • https://www.polleverywhere.com/poll_everywhere_presenter_notes.pd 5. Bias Video – 9 Minutes • *Are you biased? I am | Kristen Pressner | TEDxBasel* (Schaeublin, 2016) 6. Thoughts on this video? 7. Everyone has biases. Give analogy from DLI
	1. Quote • "racial, ethnic, and cultural attitudes and beliefs are always present, often problematic, and profoundly significant in shaping teaching conceptions and actions" (Gay, 2010, p. 143). • Would anyone like to share any thoughts on the quote that is posted? Agree? Disagree? Why?
20-25 minutes If time permits...	***Implicit Association Test (IAT)*** ***1. Developed by Project Implicit.*** • ***"a non-profit organization and international collaboration between researchers who are interested in implicit social cognition – thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control" (Project Implicit, n.d.-a)*** ***2. The IAT is designed to measure "attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report" (Project Implicit, n.d.-a). The website further explains, "The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy). The main idea is that making a response is easier when closely related items share the same response key" (Project Implicit, n.d.-b).***

	3. The scores are determined by a comparison of the time it takes you to sort the words in two different parts of the test (Project Implicit, n.d.-c). For example, the test would determine that you have an implicit preference for thin people relative to fat people if you were "faster to categorize words when Thin People and Good share a response key and Fat People and Bad share a response key" (Project Implicit, n.d.-c). 4. Today we are going to take an IAT. There are 14 to choose from and no one will know which test you chose or your results but you. If you have already taken one IAT, please choose a different (or the same) test to take today. 5. I urge you to really reflect on the results and what that means for your lens. I took the test on race and was really surprised by my results. I took it twice just to be sure something was not wrong the first time. 6. If you finish early and are waiting on others, please consider starting your journal entry for this week
5 minutes	Wrap Up 1. Take Aways • It is always my hope that each time we leave this space, we take something with us that we did not come in with. • As you reflect on today, remember that it is important to know your lens. If you are not aware of your biases, you cannot work on them; knowing matters. • Are you leaving this space with anything you did not have when you arrived? If so, what? 2. Remind participants of next session 3. Provide Journaling Time for those that wish to stay.
	Adjourn
	Diversity in Your Life Activity Picture 

Appendix J

Session 3: Cultural Competence and the Continuum

Table J.1 *Session 3: Cultural Competence and the Continuum*

Time	Session 3: Cultural Competence and The Continuum ***February 25, 2020***
	1. Setup a. Snacks - chips, popcorn, hickory sticks, Twizzlers, ice cream i. Plates, spoons b. 2 sets of Continuum Cards c. Continuum Handout d. Post-its e. Markers f. Presentation
3 minutes	1. Check In – How are you arriving to today's session?
1 minute	1. Review Group Agreements
20 minutes	1. Activity - Name Five Things (adapted from Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey in *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Edition* pp. 201-202 a. You have five minutes to "write five words or short phrases that describe the essence of who you are. These should be things that if they were taken away from you, you would not be the same person" (p. 201). b. Rank the list and cross one item off - 2 minutes c. Cross off another - 1 minute d. Cross off two more so only one remains e. Share word 2. Discussion Questions (8-10 minutes) . What did you notice as you wrote your list? a. What did you notice as you shared your list?

	b. How did it feel to have to cross items off of your list? c. Where in life does this happen? d. How does this affect the people we encounter...to see only one aspect of them? e. Do we ever ask, directly or indirectly, our students to leave part of who they are when they come to school? f. Do we ask their parents to abandon their culture while on campus? g. What do you think the point of this activity is? What did you take from it?
10 minutes	Cultural Competency 1. Post definitions submitted by participants during pre-questionnaire. 2. Also share the following definitions: a. "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cross et al., 1989, p. 28) b. "the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails mastering complex awarenesses and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge, and a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching" (Moule, 2012, p 11) c. "a developmental process that depends on the continual acquisition of knowledge, the development of new and more advanced skills, and ongoing reflective self-evaluation of progress" (Moule, 2012, p. 13)
40 minutes	The Continuum 1. Explain that we are going to discuss cultural competence in terms of being a process with stages on a continuum. • Components 1. A Developmental Process 2. Continual Acquisition of Knowledge 3. Development of New and More Advanced Skills 4. Ongoing reflective self evaluative process 2. The Cultural Proficiency Continuum was first discussed by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, Child and Adolescent Service System Program. The work was completed to "assure that system service development takes place in a culturally appropriate way in order to meet the needs of culturally and racially diverse groups" (pg. iii). While this was prepared for the mental health sector, it is easily applicable to education.

3. ***Here are the six stages of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum. You are going to work in a small group to put them in order.***
    - ***Distribute continuum cards and give each group 2 minutes to put them in order. *Take Picture****
    - ***Have the groups flip the cards to the brief description, make changes if they want. *Take Picture****
4. ***Show the correct order. Ask groups how they did.***
5. Give out Cultural Proficiency Continuum Infographic handout
6. Discuss each stage as described by Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey (2019) in *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Edition* - 25-30 minutes
    - Cultural Destructiveness - See the Difference; Stomp It Out - p. 133
        1. "Any policy, practice, or behavior that effectively eliminates another people's culture
        2. Historical Examples - Slavery, Near Extinction of American Indians, Bureau of Indian Affairs educational program (took young people from their families and placed them in boarding schools where the goal was forced assimilation. Students were forced to cut their hair, use new Anglo-American names, not allowed to speak their native language, practice religion or other cultural practices), genocide in Darfur, Hutu and Tutsi wars in Rwanda, the Holocaust
    - Cultural Incapacity - See the Difference; Make It Wrong -
        1. "The belief in the superiority of one's own culture and behavior that disempowers another's culture"
        2. Examples - Jim Crow Laws, Chinese Exclusion Act (1882 first law restricting immigration to the U.S., meant to curb influx of immigrants from China to the US)
    - Cultural Blindness - See the Difference; Dismiss It
        1. "policy, practice, or behavior that ignores existing cultural differences or that considers such differences inconsequential" OR "color and culture make no difference and that all people are the same and should be treated equally"
        2. Discomfort in acknowledging differences or Dismissive - "I don't see color"
    - Cultural Precompetence - See the Difference; Recognize What You Don't Know
        1. "trying to use appropriate behaviors and practices while recognizing that they still have much to learn"
        2. Community Examples - unintended microaggressions, "I did a Black History Project",

	"We have Week of Understanding", "At Christmas, I put a menorah up too" • Cultural Competence - See the Difference; Understand the Difference That Difference Makes 1. Accept and respect differences; carefully attend to the dynamics of difference; continually assess their own cultural knowledge and beliefs; continuously expand their cultural knowledge and resources; and variously adapt their own belief systems, policies, and practices 2. Not being afraid of teachable moments • Cultural Proficiency - See the Differences; Respond Positively and Affirmingly 1. Forward-looking and seeks to add to the knowledge base of culturally proficient practices by conducting research, developing new culturally appropriate approaches, and taking advantage of opportunities to increase his or her awareness and knowledge of others. 2. Intentionally embedding culturally relevant lessons into our curriculum, requiring Ethnic Studies 7. Discussion Questions: • Where you are on your Cultural Competence Journey? Where do you think you are on the continuum? • Where do you think our school is on the continuum? • How do you think we can grow?
	Continuum Application - 15 minutes 1. Ask participants to write examples of comments they have heard regarding cultural competence, diversity, multicultural education, etc. on post-it notes. 1. Have six examples prepared just in case it seems that no one wants to share. 2. With the group, place the statements on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum 1.
15 minutes	Wrap Up 1. Take-Aways • It is always my hope that each time we leave this space, we take something with us that we did not come in with. • As you reflect on today's session, think about the following and jot it down. This will help with your last journal entry as well as the post-questionnaire

	1. Are you leaving this space with anything you did not have when you arrived? If so, what? 2. Thank volunteers for their participation. Explain that their gift cards will be placed in their box as soon as their final journal entry and post-questionnaire are complete. 3. Provide Journaling Time for those that wish to stay.
2 minutes	Adjourn

Appendix K

Participants' Responses to the Questions on Cultural Competence

Table K.1 *Participants' Responses to the Questions on Cultural Competence*

Pseudonym	Did your teacher preparation program include any multicultural education or cultural competence courses?	How do you define cultural competence?	How important is cultural competence to you as an educator?	What do you do to further your knowledge in this area (cultural competence)?
Jennifer Lopez	No	I define it as having knowledge and skills that allow an individual to communicate and work effectively and empathetically in a cross-cultural environment.	5	Conferences, books, self-directed studies
Shakira	No	Having an understanding of those different from you, whether it be race, religion, sexual preference, etc.	5	Attend events, read articles, have conversations with those different from me.
Mojo	No	Trying to understand and be kind to all people.	4	I have attended school sponsored classes.
Sherre	No	Being able to understand and relate to people whose culture and traditions are different than my own.	4	I have attended meetings and workshops that have slightly touched upon what it means to be culturally competent. However, the best knowledge I've received comes from speaking directly with parents.
Mindy	No	Good	3	Information from current events, internet, social media, literary publications

Grace	No	An understanding of how others have been raised and what they have experienced throughout their lives both positive and negative relative to their ethnicity.	5	I ask people questions and have an open mind about our differences. I pay attention to each individual's perceptions and try to understand why they feel the way they do. What has happened in their lives that has brought them to feel the way they do.
Ticonderoga	Yes	Have an understanding and appreciation of other cultures outside our own. Being able to speak about cultures to a certain extent	5	read up on other cultures, travel, attend festivals, friends from different backgrounds
Spring	Yes	Understanding your own cultural identity, and the cultural identity of others.	5	Read and research. Speak to others about their culture.
Sally Who	No	Cultural competence is the ability to appreciate, interact and understanding how cultural affects one's view when communicating with others whose ethnicity, beliefs and cultural are different then your own.	5	I attend Diversity Equity and Inclusion Meetings at my current school. I try to read and watch videos shared by others to help me further understand their points of view. I have open and honest conversations with friends who are of different races, religions and cultural backgrounds than my own.